



ST. PAUL AND HIS LETTERS

Other Books by

CANON ANTHONY C. DEANE

Rabboni.

Jesus Christ.

The Lord's Prayer.

The Valley and Beyond.

To an Unseen Audience.

Jesus and the Unbroken Life.

Sixth Form Religion.

How to Understand the Gospels.

How to Enjoy the Bible.

(58th Thousand.)

HODDER AND STOUGHTON

ST. PAUL
&
HIS LETTERS

BY
ANTHONY C. DEANE

CANON OF WINDSOR AND
CHAPLAIN TO H.M. THE KING

LONDON
HODDER AND STOUGHTON LTD.
ST. PAUL'S HOUSE, WARWICK SQUARE, E.C.4

First printed February 1942

Made and printed in Great Britain for HODDER & STOUGHTON, LIMITED
by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, *Edinburgh*

PREFACE

THIS book aims at helping average men and women to know more about St. Paul, and to read his letters with less difficulty and greater profit. Even of those who read the Bible more or less regularly a large proportion seem to neglect all but a few favourite passages in the Pauline Epistles. Perhaps at some time they made a beginning with Romans, were perplexed (as well they might be) by the rabbinic arguments in the early chapters, and so concluded that Paul was no writer for them. Many dislike what they imagine to be his views ; a good many have a prejudice against him and all his work which is not less violent for being vague. In my first chapter I have discussed this prejudice and the misunderstandings which cause it ; here we need only note the fact that it exists. It is found rather often in contemporary essayists who, speaking with authority on other subjects, are apt to dogmatize about the New Testament without having troubled to obtain a competent knowledge of it. There is a wide and unnecessary gulf between the Paul of their imagination and the authentic Paul of history.

Again, when teaching Sixth Forms, both in a boys' public school and its feminine equivalents, I have found a general tendency to like the Gospels and to dislike the Epistles. Yet when boys or girls are helped to read an Epistle intelligently, long before

the end of the term they are keenly interested. They will debate among themselves out of school, as well as in the class-room, some of the problems it raises, and the degree in which the answers given by St. Paul can still be thought practically useful in modern circumstances. And with engaging candour they admit that a result of reading one of his letters in this way has been to make them realize for the first time the charm and the greatness of St. Paul himself.

Much the same kind of experience, but with older people and on a far larger scale, befell me when the B.B.C. gave me the opportunity of broadcasting some " talks " about St. Paul. Utterly inadequate though they were—and the temerity of attempting to handle such a theme in four talks of fifteen minutes apiece is obvious—they did stir in many listeners the wish to know more. From really large numbers of them, and from many kind readers of my earlier books, came letters begging me to write a book which might help them to understand the Epistles.

Such must be my excuse for adding yet another to the quite immense number of works about St. Paul and his Letters. For one reason or another, none of them seemed quite to have provided what a large public of general readers evidently desired.

But the business of shaping the plan of the book proved unexpectedly difficult. Some of the points were evident enough. It must begin with an account of St. Paul himself—not a biography concerned with the details of the missionary journeys and so forth, but something in the nature of a character study, describing his early life and the principal influences which then and afterwards went to form his mental equipment. Some such study, some understanding

of St. Paul's ideas, aims and character, some realization both of his greatness and his prejudices, is the first step towards a real understanding of his letters. Then there should be a chapter on the letters as a whole, giving some account of the way in which they were written, collected after an interval of perhaps a quarter of a century, and (as we should say) published.

All this was clear enough. But, after these introductory chapters, what form was the main part of the book to take—the part in which the Epistles must be treated one by one? It was easy to see what my correspondents needed; it was far less easy to see how best that need could be met. What they wanted was a book which would encourage them to approach this part of the New Testament more hopefully, with some general knowledge and understanding of the Pauline Epistles, so that afterwards they would read and study this part of the New Testament for themselves. Of commentaries there is an abundance already, although it is to be regretted that most of the first-rate commentaries require a knowledge of Greek from those who use them. Few occupations can be more profitable than to work through one of the Epistles with a good modern commentary—or, yet better, with two or three such commentaries. But few “general readers” have reached a stage when, even if they have the necessary leisure, they are prepared to undertake such study. It means sitting at a table with a Bible and the commentaries and a notebook; certainly the average man, with an initial distrust or dislike of St. Paul, will not attempt it. His wish is for a single volume, not unduly technical in its language, and not too bulky or expensive. Such help—often it is great—which he can derive

from a modernized translation of the Pauline letters is already available. There are, in fact, at least half a dozen versions in "modern" (and one in "basic") English; it would be otiose to add to them. Would a careful "analysis" of each Epistle serve his purpose? No; useful as it is in its way, any summary of this kind must inevitably seem dull and dry. Worst of all, it can do no sort of justice to St. Paul himself. It takes away from his writings all their fire, their passion, their emotion, their irony, their affection; only their desiccated skeleton is left.

In short, through something like two years after signing the agreement for this book I pondered how the main part of it could be written in a way likely to achieve its purpose, made many tentative beginnings, and destroyed them all. Then one evening I was reading Epistles very unlike those of St. Paul—the Epistles of Horace, in the delightful edition, dear to every Horace-lover, of my long-ago headmaster, E. C. Wickham. All who know it will remember the quite masterly "interpretative paraphrase", to use his own term, which Wickham prefixed to each Epistle and Satire. And suddenly it occurred to me that here was the solution of my problem. A fairly full paraphrase, written (like Wickham's) in the first person, seemed the best means of enabling the general reader both to catch something of St. Paul's voice and to gain a preliminary yet fairly clear understanding of an Epistle. There should be an introduction, to explain its purposes and the circumstances in which it was written; a few notes on points of special interest should be appended. But the paraphrase itself, if only I could construct it with even a fraction of Wickham's skill, should go far to interpret

St. Paul's meaning. As Wickham himself wrote : " A paraphrase is not a loose translation. It deliberately forfeits the power of reproducing in any way the literary form ; but it aims at preserving, and in some degree making clearer than a translation can make it, the complete articulation of the thought." It grants, in fact, a liberty which the translator, tied to the text and bound to render it without addition or subtraction, may well envy. What St. Paul wrote could be expanded in passages which he left obscure, owing to their extreme condensation. There could be considerable abbreviation also when he was diffuse or repeated himself unnecessarily—as anyone dictating a long letter and sending it off without much revision is bound to do. Sometimes exact translation would seem to be required ; then it could be given. But a few passages of purely rabbinic argument, having no permanent value or validity, could be reduced to a sentence or two, or even omitted entirely. Such is the plan which I have tried to carry out. Speaking generally, the paraphrase is shorter when the meaning of a passage, as translated by our English Bible, is perfectly clear, and longer when the passage is " difficult " or of special importance. The Epistle to Philemon alone, by reason of its brevity, is translated in full.

Another question to be answered was the degree in which it was desirable to bring before " the general reader " those details and theories of modern criticism which, naturally enough, are of engrossing interest to experts. There was no difficulty in arriving at a general principle. It seemed most important—it is, indeed, one of the chief aims of this book—to make known to a wide public those helps towards under-

standing the Epistles which the discoveries, research and study of experts have gained within the last fifty years. As yet little or nothing of them is known to a large proportion—perhaps to a great majority—of Bible-readers. But a distinction should be drawn between important conclusions about which there is substantial agreement and those other theories which often are no more than ingenious guesses. For example, very many readers must have noticed, and have been perplexed by, the seemingly unaccountable change of mood half-way through 2 Corinthians. They will be glad to know that its second part is now almost universally recognized by scholars as a separate letter, earlier than that contained in the first nine chapters. On the other hand, it is not in the least worth while to trouble the general reader with Goguel's highly imaginative—and, in the judgment of most scholars, fanciful—reconstruction of the Corinthian correspondence. Again, the reader should be told something of the arguments for and against St. Paul's authorship of "Ephesians", because the importance and value of the letter are greatly involved in this question. On the other hand, he would waste his time if he were made to examine minutely our modern theories about the *provenance* of the Captivity letters, because their value is completely unchanged whether Rome, Ephesus or Caesarea was the place in which they were composed.

The introductory chapter on St. Paul is documented, in the hope that the references given may encourage readers to fuller study. But I found it impossible to annotate the main part of the book in the same way. In the course of a long life I have worked through the Epistles with many commentaries

as a student, and have examined a good many more as a reviewer. More often than not I find myself unable to recollect from which of them comes the memory of some luminous comment or apt rendering which, perforce without acknowledgment but never without gratitude, I have used in these pages. Also I have consulted and borrowed occasionally from various modern translations of the Epistles—those (to name them in alphabetical order) by Cunningham, Goodspeed, Hayman, Moffatt, Weymouth and the anonymous *Twentieth Century New Testament*.

Two small details may be mentioned in conclusion. I have followed the usage of both the Authorized and Revised Versions by refraining from the use of capitals for pronouns relating to our Lord. And, while I have spoken of " St. Paul " throughout this preface, it seemed better to drop the prefix in the book itself. Its constant repetition, when the name occurs many times on a page, is apt to become formal if not tiresome, and its effect seems to be to dehumanize that revered apostle who, truly among the greatest of saints, was not less truly one of the most human of men.

A. C. D.

THE CLOISTERS
WINDSOR CASTLE

CONTENTS

Part I

	PAGE
ST. PAUL AND HIS LETTERS	I
I. ST. PAUL	3
II. THE LETTERS	71

Part II

THE LETTERS IN DETAIL	87
I. THE MISSIONARY LETTERS	89
1 and 2 Thessalonians	89
Galatians	105
1 Corinthians	118
2 Corinthians	141
Romans	162
II. THE CAPTIVITY LETTERS	195
Ephesians	195
Colossians	211
Philemon	222
Philippians	229

Part III

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES	243
---------------------------------	-----

PART I

ST. PAUL AND HIS LETTERS

I. ST. PAUL

II. THE LETTERS

I. ST. PAUL

THE influence of Paul the Apostle upon the history of mankind probably exceeded that of any other individual in any age. At the time of his conversion, Christianity was a nameless creed, accepted only by a small and inconspicuous group within the Jewish church. By the time of his martyrdom, some thirty years later, it had become a world religion, embodied in an independent organization. In this form it was destined to change the whole outlook on life of its adherents, to revolutionize their moral code, to influence every social institution and to re-shape every political system. The consequences of this transformation have endured through two thousand years. Throughout that period, however lamentably practice may have fallen short of principle, the avowed basis of civilization has been the religion of Christ. This is due, under Providence, to Paul. As a modern writer has declared, "it is impossible to guess what would have become of Christianity if he had never lived ; we cannot even be sure that the religion of Europe would be called by the name of Christ".⁽¹⁾ Such is the work which Paul accomplished ; such the measure of his greatness. They are attested by facts of history, which divergent opinions of his personal character and teaching should not be allowed to obscure.

The variety of these conflicting estimates is remarkable. Naturally enough, the opponents of

Christianity, past and present, have concentrated much of their attack on the man who had the largest share in its development. But within the churches also the Apostle's memory has been harmed by indiscriminate praise, wronged by neglect, and traduced by acrimonious criticism. Among educated people of our own country and time the average opinion of Paul ranges from qualified admiration to dislike. Even those who recognize his zeal, courage and devotion seldom place him among their favourite New Testament characters. The personalities of John, of Peter, of Barnabas seem to them far more attractive. A prejudice against Paul among elderly folk is often due to far-off unhappy memories of class-rooms, where the Book of Acts, that stirring record of high adventure, was debased into a course of dull lessons on the geography of Asia Minor.

Again, the ordinary man's acquaintance with the Epistles is apt to be defective. He remembers, with just admiration, the chapter which extols charity. He has had to listen often to the argument for man's resurrection, in the same Epistle, which forms the Lesson in the Burial Service. He recollects—and, from ignorance of their context, frequently misinterprets—a number of Pauline phrases which have become proverbial. A short extract from some Epistle is read in the Communion Service, a usage so ancient that no-one could wish it to be set aside. Yet the reading of a few sentences from the middle of a letter, often a few sentences taken from a sustained and lengthy argument, has little meaning for those who know nothing of the letter as a whole, nothing of the people to whom it was addressed, and

nothing of the special circumstances which caused it to be written. Intelligent reading of the Gospels has become more general within the last twenty years. Popular books and lectures have acquainted the public with much of the invaluable help towards a right understanding of the Gospels which modern research and modern scholarship have gained. To-day it is not the technical scholar alone who knows something of the religious, economic and social conditions of Palestine which helped to shape our Lord's teaching, something of the relationship between the first three Gospels, and something of the intriguing questions suggested by the fourth. There has been no corresponding improvement, unfortunately, in the general knowledge of the Pauline Epistles. Yet this is, in a sense, even more desirable. Beyond doubt the Gospels are at once the most important and most attractive part of the New Testament. They are, indeed, the most important books in the world. But a deep appreciation of them and great spiritual profit is possible for readers who have never so much as heard of the synoptic problem or "form criticism". It is otherwise with the Pauline Epistles. Not merely their more abstruse details, but their primary meaning, the whole point of their arguments and precepts, must remain hidden from those who hardly realize the distinction between a letter and an abstract treatise, and have no idea why some individual letter was sent at a particular moment to a special group of Christians.

Upon a mistaken estimate of his writings follows an equally erroneous estimate of Paul himself. The popular view admits his capacity for noble and

inspiring thought. But it finds some of his pages hopelessly obscure, while others seem to reveal him as a man of narrow sympathies, unduly concerned to enforce unimportant or undesirable restrictions. These and similar criticisms are misconceived. They mistake advice given to small groups of Christians in the first years for rules to be observed in perpetuity. The critics forget, or have never ascertained, in what circumstances the Apostle wrote, what traditions he had inherited, and what were the dangers menacing Christianity from Judaism on the one side and paganism on the other. It is to some of the precepts rather than to the principles of Paul's letters that the modern reader demurs. The principles have an undiminished validity. Many of the precepts can be set aside as obsolete. That the Christian should be kind and forgiving to his fellow-Christian, "even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you", is a principle never to be superseded. But the precept that a Christian must never take legal proceedings against another need no longer be taken as binding because it was thought desirable by Paul for members of the Corinthian church in the year 55. That the services of the church should be conducted "decently and in order" is a right ideal for all time. That women should never enter a place of worship with the head uncovered is a rule, based upon a rabbinic legend, of no real importance. In short, Paul's letters, with Paul himself, have been misjudged through the common failure to distinguish the temporary elements in them from those of permanent value.

But the strangest of all the false ideas which have been used to disparage Paul is that which has

attacked the great liberator of Christianity as its enslaver. A widespread belief persists that the influence of Paul replaced "the simple religion of the Gospels" by an abstruse theology and a rigid ecclesiastical system. The sequence in which the New Testament books stand in the Bible has concealed from the general public the fact that all the letters of Paul are earlier in date than any of the canonical Gospels. Obviously the Apostle could not contrive to reinterpret or replace books which as yet were unwritten. It is true that the reader who passes from the Gospels to the Epistles experiences a change of atmosphere. The tone and temper are different. The teaching, when examined closely, is found to be in accord upon essential points, yet in detail and emphasis the doctrine of the Epistles often seems notably divergent from the Gospels.

This unlikeness between the two sets of documents, between the Gospels on the one hand and the Pauline Epistles on the other, is due far less to any contrary opinions held by the writers than to the dissimilar character, purpose and occasion of the documents themselves. The Evangelists aimed, and with a remarkable degree of success, at writing narratives that should be strictly impersonal. Each of the first three Gospels was influenced by the special needs of the readers for whom it was written, and the Fourth Gospel by the special needs of the later age in which it was composed. Yet the single purpose common to all was to describe the ministry, the character and the teaching of Jesus Christ, and not at all to disclose the personal experiences, arguments and opinions of the author. The Epistles, on the contrary, are as personal as the Gospels are

impersonal. Every one of them is tinged by the idiosyncrasies of its writer. These often impulsive and hastily-dictated letters are unreserved in their candour. Through their narrative, exhortation and argument is seen a pellucid portrait of Paul himself, with his beliefs, experiences, enthusiasms and antipathies. Probably nothing has contributed more to the popular disparagement of Paul than the accident that in the Bible only a single book separates the Epistles from the Gospels. The Epistles reveal the character and teaching of Paul. The Gospels reveal the character and teaching of Jesus Christ. No reader can pass from one to the other without being aware of an illimitable contrast. But no reader can justly belittle one of the greatest of human beings because he was not more than human.⁽²⁾

Like every other human being, he had his faults and limitations. But the idea that his influence fettered a free spiritual religion with the bonds of ecclesiasticism, if the most common, is also the least justified of the charges brought against him. It does not merely pervert but reverses the truth. Therefore this misconception should be removed at the outset of our study.

Paul is justly described as "the Apostle of the Gentiles". This title has often obscured the fact that for something like twelve years after his conversion his missionary activity was almost limited to those who, like himself, were Jews by birth and became Christians by conviction. To them the acceptance of the new faith seemed no reason for discarding the ceremonial observances of the old. Rather, they were more devout Jews when they had

become devout Christians. Jesus Christ had himself been circumcised, had taught in the synagogues and the Temple, had taken part in their services, had made the prescribed pilgrimages to Jerusalem to observe the great religious festivals of the Jewish year. The Jewish Christians of the first days had no thought of abandoning these customs or of quitting their national church. To its usages they added that of meeting separately with their fellow converts for the celebration of the Eucharist and for Christian worship, but as yet the Christian church had no independent existence. It was, in effect, a group within the Jewish church. There were, however, many varieties of Judaism itself at this time. The Greek-speaking Jews of the "Dispersion", scattered over Asia Minor, Greece, Italy and Egypt, far exceeded in numbers the Aramaic-speaking Jews dwelling in Palestine. They were influenced by the culture of the people in whose territories they had settled. They knew something of Greek thought and something, possibly, of Greek and Latin mystery cults. Certainly they had developed a *quasi*-mystical school of thought of their own. In consequence, the teaching given in the synagogues of the Dispersion was more liberal and less insistent on the letter of the ceremonial Law than that in vogue in Palestine. Yet in Palestine itself divergent views were to be found. The hostility between the Sadducees and Pharisees was notorious, and St. Luke records an occasion when Paul made a use, adroit rather than creditable, of this party rancour.⁽³⁾ The Pharisees themselves were divided into two rival schools of thought: the followers of Rabbi Hillel on the one hand, of Rabbi Shammai on the other.

It is necessary to keep such facts in mind because the older commentaries, with some modern books of the popular type, ignore them. They imply that Judaism everywhere in Paul's age was Judaism of the rigorist type which had its centre in Jerusalem. Rigorist and liberal Jews alike, however, still regarded the Jewish church as the one church of God, still observed at least the main requirements of its ceremonial Law, and still ranked observance of the legalistic code as the test of personal "righteousness". The only distinction between the small number of Jews who became Christians and the vastly larger number who did not was that the former believed Jesus to be the Christ, the Messiah who had risen from the grave and soon would return to earth, while the latter rejected this view, and still awaited the coming of a Messiah, or at least some direct intervention of God, in the future.

At no time after his conversion could Paul accept the doctrine that outward conformity with a code was the kind of "righteousness" required from man. The whole teaching of our Lord had been designed to break down this tragic delusion. There must be a direct relationship with God, a faith which would show itself in resolute endeavour to do the Divine will. Such righteousness as man could gain must come through the pardon given by Christ's death and the power of the Spirit given after his resurrection. Those sharing this belief were admitted into a society, the members of which, as Christ had desired, used baptism as their initiatory rite and the Eucharist as the symbol and means of mystical union with one another and with him.

Such, in its essentials, seems to have been Paul's

teaching. In the early years of his work it is improbable that he saw any reason for a definite separation of Christianity from Judaism. The history of his race, as he interpreted it, was the history of a progressive development in preparation for Christianity. The doctrine of the Law on the one hand and the Prophets on the other had long since become rival schools of thought in the national religion, and from the time of Malachi to that of the Baptist—a period of some four and a half centuries—the legalistic party had been increasingly dominant. But Jesus, instead of identifying himself with either school, had used and developed both. His aim, as he expressed it, was not to destroy the Law or the Prophets, but to fill each with new significance. He carried further all that was noblest in the teaching of the Prophets; he showed the true validity of the Law by extending its scope from the realm of outward deed to that of inward motive. The Law, in other words, was spiritualized and amplified, but not repealed.

Such was the view which Paul took of the religion in which he had been brought up, and such the view which he desired his Jewish converts to Christianity to share. Obviously, their scheme of values must be changed. The legalistic conception of "righteousness" must be replaced by that which their Divine Master had given. To keep the heart and mind in tune with the will of God, to consecrate all life to the performance of his will, and not the punctilious observance of a code, must rank henceforward as the essential demand of their creed. But if these points were definitely accepted, the disregard or retention of their accustomed ceremonial observances by Jews who had become Christians seemed to Paul a matter

of indifference. In his view, as he wrote in later years, "what counts is neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; it is the new creation" ⁽⁴⁾—the creation of "a new man", with a changed attitude towards God. Paul himself probably was loyal to the Jewish ritual through these earlier years of his ministry, during which his work lay mainly among Jews. "To the Jews I became as a Jew", ⁽⁵⁾ he wrote afterwards, with a thought of this period in his mind. And much later he was still willing to conform with the Jewish ceremonies of vow-taking, at the bidding of friends who belonged to the rigorist party. By this means, they urged, he would disprove the charge brought against him of "forsaking Moses", and would show that "thou thyself walkest orderly, keeping the Law". ⁽⁶⁾

In short, he was glad enough that fellow-members of his race should continue to observe any ordinances of their national religion which they valued, always providing that these were regarded as wholly subordinate to the vital matters of faith. Such ordinances had a historic significance, they linked the present with the great past of the Jewish people, they were symbols of the special privileges bestowed by God on their race. Viewed in this light, and as symbols of the method in which the way for Christ had been prepared, they had their usefulness. Their observance in detail was doubtless far from strict among the Greek-speaking Jews of Syria and Cilicia, among whom Paul worked for the first half of his life as a Christian. So far as they were observed, however, they would remind these "Jews of the Dispersion" of their historic ancestry, and form a link between them and the Jews of Palestine. But

the matter was not of great importance either way. The continuance or neglect of Jewish ceremonies and restrictions by Jews who had accepted Christianity was not a matter which gave Paul much concern, provided only that the Jewish code was duly relegated to a quite secondary place.

Among his fellow-Jews, then, his missionary work seems to have continued up to a date which cannot be fixed precisely, but was not earlier than twelve or later than fourteen years after his conversion. Then there was a sudden and dramatic change. It began at Antioch in Pisidia in the course of what is commonly called "the first missionary journey". Paul and Barnabas preached Christianity to a Jewish congregation in the local synagogue with a success that filled the usual leaders of the synagogue with jealousy. Through their influence the Christian mission preachers were refused a hearing on the following sabbath, when a vast congregation had assembled. So they turned elsewhere. "It was necessary", they said, "that the word of God should first be spoken to you. Seeing ye thrust it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of eternal life, lo, we turn to the Gentiles." (7)

In this almost accidental fashion began what ever afterwards Paul accounted the real work of his life. For this all that he had so far done as a Christian teacher was preparatory. It was, he now felt, in order that he might become the Apostle of the Gentiles that he had been granted the vision and received the call on the Damascus road. His fellow-leaders in the Christian community were readily convinced that here lay his true vocation; "they saw", he recorded, "that I had been entrusted with the gospel of the

uncircumcision ", and agreed that he and Barnabas "should go unto the Gentiles and they unto the circumcision." (8) The project of a mission which would bring Christianity to the Gentiles and the Gentiles to Christianity was unanimously approved.

But here unanimity ended and fierce controversy began. It roused strong animosities among fellow-Christians and placed one Apostle in open conflict with others. It involved the whole future of the Christian religion. Acting, as they believed, on the highest principles, some of the most prominent supporters of this faith endeavoured to restrict it in a way which must have led certainly to its impoverishment and probably to its extinction. Paul's far-sightedness and heroic resolution alone averted this disaster. Christianity must have been limited to a dwindling cult in a small corner of the world had not the Apostle of the Gentiles risked his life by becoming also the Apostle of spiritual freedom. At every stage the story of the Christian church is chequered by controversies, but this, the first of the long sequence, was probably the most momentous of all.

Many prominent members of the Christian body at this time had been brought up, like Paul, in that rigorist type of Judaism which had its stronghold in Jerusalem itself. Unlike Paul, they had not relegated their Judaism to a secondary position when they accepted Christianity. When Paul announced that for the future he proposed to preach Christianity to the Gentiles, they had no objection to offer. But what did Christianity mean? Their reply was simple: "To be a devout Jew and to believe that Jesus is the Messiah—that is true Christianity". (9) Obviously, the Gentiles were not and could not

become members of the Jewish race. But they could become members of the Jewish church, alien converts to which were known as "proselytes". Every male proselyte must be circumcised. Every proselyte, male and female alike, must make the Law and its traditional interpretation the supreme rule of life, and conformity with its elaborate provisions the supreme test of righteousness. Then baptism could follow, and whatever specifically Christian doctrine Paul thought suitable. But the primary obligation of every Gentile who wished to become a Christian was, as a preliminary step, to join the Jewish church as a proselyte and to live in strict obedience to its ceremonial and other rules.

They had much to urge in support of this view. The members of the Jewish church, with those adopted into it, were God's chosen people. All the knowledge of God was contained in their scriptures, to which Paul himself continually referred as a basis of his arguments. With the Jews alone God had established his covenant, and the Divine Messiah had come to the world as a member of their race. When he first sent forth the Apostles to preach, he had definitely forbidden them to carry his message to Gentiles ; it was to be given to the house of Israel alone. Afterwards he had extended its scope, and therefore Paul's projected mission to the Gentiles was permissible enough. But of necessity it must be loyal to the ancient covenant. "Must one who would be a Christian first become a Jew ? Was the rite of circumcision a prerequisite for fellowship in Christ ?" ⁽¹⁰⁾ "Most certainly," replied the rigorists of Jerusalem, whom it is convenient to describe by the term "Judaizers". "The first and essential task

of anyone who preaches Christianity to the Gentiles must be to take care that they are enrolled as proselytes of the Jewish church."

It may well seem strange that the Jews of this period should so far disregard their tradition of national exclusiveness as to desire converts from the Graeco-Roman world. Yet in fact their eagerness to gain proselytes had long since become proverbial,⁽¹¹⁾ and they were quick to realize that to gain wealthy adherents from the Gentiles was an effective means of increasing their own resources and influence. Again, readers who recollect the contemptuous references to the Jews which abound in Latin literature may wonder that Judaism should have had any attractiveness for the Graeco-Roman peoples. The explanation lies in the bankruptcy of their own creeds. The gods of classical antiquity were discredited, but the ineradicable demand of human nature for a vital religion persisted. In the hope of satisfying it, many turned to one or other of the oriental cults.⁽¹²⁾ The Egyptian Isis gained a large number of new devotees. The cult of the Persian Mithras became still more popular in many parts of the Roman Empire; but for the rise of Christianity, indeed, it might well have become a world-religion. And, while the Jews themselves were generally scorned, Judaism was not without attractiveness to the Roman mind. Monotheism, with its belief in a single all-powerful God, doubtless seemed a welcome change from the old mythology, with its large assortment of deities, some of them rather disreputable, and all of them apparently impotent. To the Roman mind, again, the clear-cut rigid code of morality and conduct which Judaism supplied would make a strong appeal.

And, in a general state of unrest and moral decay, in moods close to despair, people are ready to take up for a short time any creed that happens to be the fashion of the moment. It was not the citizens of Athens alone who were eager enough to hear and debate any new message from any new teacher.

These conditions seemed to favour Paul's projected missionary enterprise. The Judaizing party among his fellow-Christians were quite clear as to the course it must take. He must encourage his Gentile listeners to join the Jewish church as proselytes in order that they might also become Christians, and circumcision must be given as much importance as baptism. Probably no-one doubted that Paul, himself a Pharisee of the strictest sort, would accept this view. But before long the Jerusalem leaders heard, with extreme dismay, that he was taking a quite different line, was declaring that even for a Jewish Christian the observance of the ceremonial Law had become quite unessential, because the new moral code of Christianity had abrogated and superseded it. To take any other view, he held, would be to empty the doctrine of the Atonement of all meaning. "If righteousness be through the Law, then Christ died for nought", to quote his blunt statement in a subsequent letter.⁽¹³⁾ But if even Jews were now exempt from the obligations of a Law intrinsically Jewish, how grotesque it would be to tell his Gentile converts that this obsolete code must be accepted as strictly binding upon them! Nothing whatever would induce him to give them such teaching.

It was a tremendous decision. Paul must have foreseen at least some of its consequences and many of its dangers. For him it meant that henceforward

he would be hated as a traitor by a large proportion of his own race. They would pursue him with implacable hostility, they would attempt to neutralize his influence and to discredit his character among his converts. Some of them would look for an opportunity of assassinating him. Some would attempt to bring about his destruction by representing him as a fomenter of riots and insurrections to the Roman government, which as yet had been well enough disposed towards him. Personal risk, however, would be little regarded by Paul. But these were supplemented by other dangers, and of a kind which must have caused him profound anxiety. The course he had resolved to follow might bring a fatal disunion into the Christian society while it was still in its first stage of development. What would be the attitude of its leaders? The influence of the Judaizers was strong in Jerusalem. Here James presided over the Christian community, and if, as is generally believed, he were our Lord's kinsman, this fact would give him a special prestige. What if James strongly opposed Paul's view, as seemed only too possible? And what of the easily-swayed Peter, and the others? The result, even if Paul found some ardent and influential supporters for his view, might easily be a schism that would wreck the future of Christianity. Yet this, though the greatest, was not the only danger involved by Paul's decision. He must have foreseen that his doctrine, opposed by the most rigid party within the Christian community, would also be perverted by the least rigid. There were those who certainly would identify the liberty he taught with licence. They wished to combine Christian creed with pagan conduct. When Paul declared that

Christians were no longer bound by the Law they would represent this as meaning the moral law. They would claim that they had his authority to indulge in licentiousness, since he had declared Christians to be exempt from the Law. This was no imaginary danger. That Paul's doctrine was distorted in this fashion is shown by a number of warnings in his letters. That the distortion long persisted is made clear by the misnamed Second Epistle of Peter. Its most probable date is some thirty or forty years after Paul's death. The writer still had to deal with Christians who wished to defy the moral law, and quoted Paul's writings as justifying their attitude.

But neither dangers to the Christian community, which must have concerned him deeply, nor dangers to himself, for which he cared nothing, deflected Paul from what he believed to be the only right course. He saw that to break with Judaism and to free Christianity from its bondage must involve grave risk. But he saw also that to acquiesce in the continuance of that bondage would be fatal. Presented as a form of Judaism, for a time Christianity would doubtless gain a number of proselytes in certain districts. But it would decay with the decay of Judaism and would lose all chance of becoming a world-religion. The attempt to carry such a creed to all nations would be futile. Above all, it would be a creed at variance with the teaching of Christ himself. The new wine of his Gospel must not be poured into the old bottles of the legalistic system. Faith in the atoning power of Christ's death, in the new power over sin brought by his resurrection, in a complete transformation of life by submission to his

will, so that man becomes a new creature—it was the proclamation of this creed, Paul felt, which could win the world for God, which alone could satisfy the souls of men, bringing them the needed sense of pardon, peace and joy. What compromise was possible between such a creed and one which set the Law in the foremost place, and made strict conformity with its elaborate code the test of righteousness? At all costs he must proclaim the Gospel of liberty, the deliverance of Christianity from the enslavement of the outworn Law.

Such was his choice. We cannot fail to recognize either its momentous bearing upon future history or the superb courage necessary for making it. The beginning of the conflict between his view and that of the rigorists soon followed. Paul himself gives an account of an incident at Antioch. Here were a number of Gentile Christians, with whom Peter had formed the habit of taking his meals—an action prohibited for a Jew by the legalistic code. Emissaries of the rigorist party at Jerusalem came to Antioch and rebuked Peter for what they regarded as culpable laxity, whereupon he ceased to dine at the Gentile-Christians' table. This seemed to Paul a test case, and he did not hesitate to denounce Peter in public, although Peter had long been regarded as the leader of the Apostles. "You who are a Jew"—so we may paraphrase his words⁽¹⁴⁾—"do not strictly observe the Law. On the contrary, you have been accustomed, rightly enough, to dine with your fellow-Christians who are Gentiles. Yet, though being a Jew, you feel free to disregard the Law, now, at the bidding of these Jerusalem people, you propose to side with those who insist that the Gentiles must

conform strictly with that Jewish Law which you yourself have had the courage to violate!" The force of that argument was unanswerable.

The question of what must be demanded of Gentile converts was referred to a meeting of Christian leaders at Jerusalem. Its judgment, delivered by James, seems to have been in the nature of a compromise. Yet it conceded to Paul the points about which he was particularly anxious. Above all, it did not insist on the necessity of circumcision, which meant that it did not try to enforce admission into the Jewish church as a condition of joining the Christian community. We need not concern ourselves here with the details of the dispute. Some of them are obscure. On some points it seems impossible to reconcile the narrative of Acts with that supplied by Paul in his Galatian letter. Yet this and others of his letters show plainly enough how acute was the controversy, which persisted, in a greater or less degree, through the rest of his life. Again, the precise character of Palestinian Judaism in the New Testament period admits of doubt. A store of valuable information concerning it was contributed by Christian writers of Jewish origin,⁽¹⁵⁾ and the modern tendency to undervalue their immense industry and specialist research is to be deprecated. Yet probably enough their pictures were in some respects too dark, and they over-emphasized the supposed burdens imposed on the average Palestinian Jew by the legalistic system. On the other side, more recent writers ⁽¹⁶⁾ have drawn, with charm and persuasiveness, a highly idealized picture of Judaism as it existed in Palestine during the first century. But were this picture completely true, much of the

New Testament records, written by inhabitants of Palestine and derived from their personal experience, must be false. In particular, it would make our Lord's tremendous denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees and their system inexplicable, and indeed unwarranted.

But these controversial details lie, fortunately enough, outside our present scope. It is a matter not of conjecture but certainty that Christianity in its first days was no more than a cult within Judaism. It is a matter of certainty that Paul, by a decision of magnificent courage, set himself to bring this limitation to an end. He claimed independence and liberty for the church of Christ. Instead of being a somewhat nebulous community within the Jewish church, Christianity, under Paul's leadership, developed its own system. As a modern writer has observed, "he would not come to terms with any other religion", and, as he travelled, established "a definitely organized community of local churches, based on the model of synagogues of the Dispersion".⁽¹⁷⁾

It may be hoped that enough has been said to dispose of a misconception that does strange injustice to Paul's work and character. It was he who, by heroic self-sacrifice and in the face of immense dangers, risked all in order to secure liberty and independence for the religion of Christ. There could scarcely be a more ironic fate than that he, of all men, should be depicted by popular imagination as one who found Christianity free and left it fettered.

Popular estimates of Paul have fluctuated greatly in the course of centuries. His place in Christian

history is so prominent that any marked change in religious thought is apt to bring a corresponding change of opinion about the greatness of Paul's character and the permanent value of his work. But there can be no question of the height to which his repute mounted during his lifetime and for a considerable period after his death. Always, it is true, he had his opponents and detractors. No other fate could be expected for a man of his impetuous and forcible personality, whose doctrines seemed subversive to his fellow-Jews, whose preaching on a first visit to a town would draw a congregation such as their own had failed to attract in many years. The Philippian letter, possibly the latest surviving in a complete form, shows that the Judaizing attack still persisted, and that Paul's language about it was as vehement as ever. The rest of this Epistle is remarkable for its happy atmosphere, its exquisite courtesy, its tender charm. But when Paul turns to Jewish Christians who would enforce circumcision on his Gentile converts, he denounces them as "dogs", as "mischief-makers", as "self-mutilators".⁽¹⁸⁾ Yet although this dispute and others of a less vital character continued, and although Paul always had his critics within as well as outside the Christian society, there is no hint after the first crisis of any friction between himself and the Twelve. There had been a time when James, the head of the church in Jerusalem, where legalism had its stronghold, could not endorse Paul's attitude towards the Law. But as time went on he was broadminded enough to modify that view. The results of the message which Paul brought to the Gentiles and the success of his missionary work among them seemed sufficient evidence that the

teaching he gave must be teaching entrusted to him by God. On his part Paul had rendered important service to the poverty-stricken community of Christians in Jerusalem. He had taken great pains to organize contributions from the Gentile churches he founded, and on his final visit to Jerusalem he brought a substantial gift with him, and proposed himself to superintend its distribution. He was warmly welcomed by James and his colleagues, and willingly complied, at their suggestion, with one of the minor ordinances of the Law in order to disprove the charges of those who depicted him as its revolutionary and indiscriminate opponent.

This episode is of importance, because it refutes the popular idea which imagines Paul to be, more or less, the rival and opponent of the first apostles. Party spirit, that too frequent accompaniment of ecclesiastical zeal, began to show itself in the churches from very early days, and at Corinth, for example, there were a Paul-party and a Peter-party, and an Apollos-party also. But these were local, unimportant and probably short-lived developments. All that the Pauline devotees drew from Paul was a frank rebuke, and it is unlikely that the other factions received any better encouragement from Peter and Apollos. Whatever transient misgivings Paul's approach to the Gentiles aroused in James or others of the Twelve during its initial stage, there is not a shred of evidence of disagreement on any essential point of Christian doctrine. Even by his most hostile critics Paul was attacked always as a supplanter of the Law, never as a perverter of the Gospel.

During his lifetime Paul was not only beloved by a very wide and very varied circle of friends, but held

in high honour throughout the local churches. The most conclusive evidence on this point is provided less by any of his own statements or even by Luke's narratives in Acts than by the survival of the Epistles. The significance of this fact is often unnoticed. If we are careful to keep the letters which some personal friend or public leader sends us, it shows we hold him in high regard. But that regard must be altogether exceptional if we preserve, and even publish, not merely his amiable letters of sympathy and approval, but letters which convey frank and stinging rebukes. Yet letters of this character from Paul, as well as those in a more welcome vein, were treasured by the communities he addressed. "How came the churches", asks Dr. Albert Schweitzer,⁽¹⁹⁾ "to preserve documents which redounded so little to their credit? And it is still more astonishing that they allowed their shame to be continually recalled in public worship", when the letters were read aloud. Nothing could have shown more conclusively how profound was the veneration for Paul. The natural instinct of any community receiving a letter of rebuke, such as he addressed to the Galatians, would have been, after reading it with resentment or shame, most carefully to destroy it. But, whether it praised or blamed, a letter from Paul was a possession to be cherished, and shared so far as possible with neighbouring churches.

Paul himself sometimes encouraged the transmission of his letters from one church to another. Not only would this lighten his burden of a correspondence which had often to be carried on in circumstances of a most unpropitious kind, and at times when his overworked body and mind craved rest,

but it would strengthen that community of interest and sympathy between the local churches which he greatly desired to promote. Not without some effort can the modern reader keep in mind how slow was travel and how difficult was communication in the New Testament age. The circulation as opportunity offered of a Pauline letter might do a little towards bridging the gulf that still existed between founding scattered local churches and founding the Christian church. Yet Paul would have been astonished to know that his letters, some of them perhaps hurriedly dictated to deal with problems of the moment in a local church, would survive to be ranked among the sacred scriptures, and that after nineteen centuries every sentence in them would still be studied with minute care.

It is impossible to fix precisely the date when the collection that we know as the Pauline Epistles was put together. Unfortunately there are no materials for anything like an exact chronology of the apostolic and sub-apostolic ages. Widely separated dates are often assigned by various scholars, using indirect evidence, to the same event or document. Our only source of knowledge about Paul, apart from his own writings, is Luke's "Acts of the Apostles". But the date of Acts has been placed as early as the year 64 by some students and as late as 120 by others. In the judgment of most modern scholars, however, a more probable time is between 80 and 85. To assume tentatively the time when Luke's second volume began to be circulated in the Christian churches helps us to determine the approximate time when the surviving letters of Paul were collected, edited and reissued. It seems certain that no such

collection existed when Luke wrote his Acts of the Apostles ; if it had, he must surely have made use of it when describing Paul's life and missionary work. But not one quotation from the Epistles or one reference to Paul's letter-writing occurs in Acts. Assuming, then, the date of Acts to be about A.D. 85, we may say with some confidence that Paul's letters were not collected—or at least were not made widely known in a collected form—until later. Indeed, Luke's silence about the Epistles seems to suggest that, though a number of them still lay safely in the treasure-chests of the churches to which they had been addressed, to some extent they were forgotten. But if they had not been collected before the year 85, or thereabouts, the collection had been made when 2 Peter was written, for this book with its reference to "all the epistles" of Paul definitely implies that all were then available for Christian readers. And the approximate date of 2 Peter seems to be the year 100. The Pauline influence is very perceptible in the Fourth Gospel and the Apocalypse of St. John, while Clement, writing to the Corinthians in 95 or 96, tells them to "take up the epistle of the blessed Paul the Apostle".⁽²⁰⁾

There seems, then, some ground for supposing that Paul's surviving letters—which can represent no more than a fraction of his correspondence—were grouped, edited and gradually circulated among the churches about the year 90. This was some twenty-five years after his death. If we ask what was the cause of this interval, and why the reissue seemed desirable in or near the year 90, it is not difficult to suggest what seems at least a plausible explanation. We are helped to it by remembering what is almost

the normal course of events after the death of some eminent man or distinguished writer in our own days. For a short time his name is on all lips, and there are frequent quotations from his speeches or books. But afterwards, often with surprising quickness, a reaction follows ; the dead man seems to be almost forgotten and the demand for his books comes to an end. Through many years there is no revival of his fame. Then an appreciative biography appears which gives him a new vogue. His neglected books are republished and have large sales, while the public is eager for every scrap of information about their author. It seems likely that after Paul's death his repute went through an analogous process of decline and recovery. With the disappearance of his magnetic personality there was an inevitable weakening of his influence. Year by year more of those who had been his friends, converts or fellow-workers passed away. Year by year some of the churches included more members whose religion was a blend of Christianity with the philosophy they had acquired in their pre-Christian days. Because this hybrid creed could not be reconciled with the Pauline theology, its supporters set themselves to disparage Paul's authority and to supplant his doctrine. So far as their influence prevailed, his letters would no longer be read aloud at Christian gatherings. Through these and other factors Paul's reputation may have suffered a considerable eclipse.

Then came the appearance of Luke's two volumes. The younger generation, to whom Paul had become not much more than a name, must have been profoundly impressed by the picture of him they found in Acts. There his wonderful character, his devotion,

his courage, his energy were plainly shown. No wonder if the readers were enormously impressed, realized for the first time the greatness of the man and the vast importance of his work. Was there any means, they wondered, of learning yet more about him? There was; it was found that long letters of his, letters steeped in his personality, had been preserved in a number of scattered places. Accordingly, the suggestion followed that these should be brought together and edited—by this means any incomplete fragments, instead of being lost, could be worked into some of the others—after which copies of the whole collection could be made and distributed among the principal churches. There is a possibility—which may almost be termed a probability—that the collection was made at and issued from Ephesus. There is also a possibility—though this is no more than an attractive and ingenious guess—that the Onesimus of the Epistle to Philemon was the editor. But if the sequence of events was that which has been suggested here, and it was the new interest in Paul roused by Acts which resulted in the collection of his letters, then we may be said to owe to Luke our possession not only of the Third Gospel and Acts but of the Pauline Epistles also.

By what would now be termed the publication of his letters, Paul's reputation not merely grew but entered a new phase. Henceforward he was venerated not as the church's greatest missionary but as its greatest theologian. To use the word "publication" is, however, to employ an evident anachronism. Yet even erudite scholars seem at times to slip into this error when, having fixed the "date" of a New Testament book, they speak as though at this date it

became immediately available for readers throughout Christendom. It must be remembered how slowly and laboriously copies had to be made from the papyrus-roll on which the original MS. was written, and with what difficulty and how slowly the copies would be transmitted to the widely separated churches. But, however gradual the process, the Epistles of Paul in their collected form made their way to all the local churches, and were increasingly regarded as authoritative on points of doctrine. By the middle of the second century, the Christian churches had to contend with various eccentric forms of belief known collectively as "Gnosticism". This term is derived from a Greek word meaning "knowledge", because the adherents of these sects claimed a special esoteric knowledge of their own. Broadly speaking, they attempted to graft upon Christianity various strange ideas about spirits, demons and magic. These concern us only so far as they bear indirectly upon the repute of the Pauline Epistles. In order to counteract the influence of Gnostic literature, it seemed desirable to frame an authoritative list, a "canon", of apostolic writings. At first the list varied slightly in various churches, but all Paul's Epistles were included unhesitatingly with the exception of Philemon. The objection to this—happily soon abandoned—was based upon an unwillingness to allow a private letter an equal place with his apostolic writings. But the general test of a document's right to a place in the canon was its apostolic origin. Hebrews, for instance, was wrongly omitted by some churches from the New Testament on the wholly accurate ground that it was not Paul's work; it was rightly admitted by other churches in the mistaken belief

that Paul was its author. In a surprisingly short time, however, and long before the result was formally ratified by Church Councils, the general sense of the Christian community had adopted that list of New Testament writings which is still accepted by every branch of the Christian church to-day. And in that list all the known Epistles of Paul the Apostle were included.

With his writings enshrined among the sacred Scriptures, his fame was henceforward secure so long as the New Testament itself survived. Because they had been given this new importance, his letters began at once to be studied with new attention. Patristic writings, both Greek and Latin, abound in quotations from them. The earliest complete commentary was that of Ambrosiaster, the date of which is about A.D. 375. Much earlier, however, there were numerous commentaries on, or expositions of, single Epistles. At the end of the fourth century Jerome supplied a list of the writings then extant on four of the Pauline Epistles ; its length enables us to guess how large the total would have been had it included all the treatises which the whole of Paul's writings had already brought into being.

A tribute of a different kind was paid to his memory at this time. From the end of the fourth century the church began to keep the earliest of its Apostolic feast-days. The joint festival of St. Peter and St. Paul, who were believed to have suffered martyrdom at Rome on the same day, was observed by the Eastern churches on December 28 and by the Western churches on June 29. The festival of the Conversion of St. Paul, on January 25, is later by some centuries in its origin. The feast

of Peter and Paul, fellow-martyrs and joint founders of the church in Rome, was observed in our own country until the Reformation. It was Cranmer who, mistakenly enough, deprived Paul of his share in the June 29 commemoration. When in the Middle Ages the church of Rome developed its Petrine claims, there was a natural tendency to relegate Paul to the background. The sequence of a familiar proverb was reversed, and it was felt that to pay honour to Paul was to rob Peter. Yet from the fourth century the joint-festival of June 29 had witnessed to the ancient belief that Paul no less than Peter had founded the church in Rome. That Cranmer should have set aside this memorial seems the more strange because Paul was conspicuously the patron saint of the Reformers, who indeed may be said to have carried their veneration of him to the further side of idolatry. In the Tyndale and Matthew New Testament of 1548, for instance, Tyndale's preface to Romans begins: "Forasmuch as the Epistle to the Romans is the principal and most excellent part of the New Testament . . .", a comparative estimate of this Epistle and the Gospels which must seem not less than astounding. "I think it meet", Tyndale continues, "that every Christian man should know it by heart and without the book", a feat of memory which perhaps not one man in a million could hope to achieve. But the reformers, contrasting the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith with the doctrine of justification by sacramental ceremonies, attributed to their ecclesiastical opponents, claimed Paul as their champion, and confidently quoted his writings as the final support of their arguments.

This view of him persisted in our national life, and from the time of the Reformation to the close of the Victorian period Paul was commonly identified, in a way which might well have astonished him, with the likes and dislikes, the prejudices and characteristics, of the average Englishman's religion. But in the present century his repute in this country has declined. He ought, indeed, to be understood better and valued more highly than before, owing to the fresh knowledge of his writings and work which modern scholarship has gained. But there is apt to be a lamentably long interval before the truths established by Biblical scholarship, truths which stand apart from merely speculative theories, are shared by the general public, and much of the indifference or dislike with which Paul is viewed to-day springs from ignorance of them. In a recent period, too, there has been a fashion of exchanging historic Christianity for a vague philanthropy, of maintaining that right conduct has no vital relationship with right belief, and that it is possible to fulfil the demands of Christianity without accepting the Christian creed. It was inevitable that those holding such opinions should belittle Paul, because in no way could their views and his teaching be reconciled. No-one was opposed more resolutely to mere ecclesiasticism. No-one risked so much or achieved so great a triumph for the cause of religious liberty. Yet no-one was more insistent, fully though he recognized the limitations of human knowledge, that to follow Christ was the road to gaining a definite creed, which would be re-verified by experience and held with passionate conviction.

Another factor which still causes Paul's writings

to be misunderstood and undervalued is of ancient origin. It goes back, in fact, to the time of his earliest commentators and expositors. It lies in regarding each Pauline Epistle as a theological essay, and the Epistles in their collected form as an authoritative compendium of Christian doctrine and ethics. The mistake was the more easily made by the early commentators because in their time various theologians, having composed careful and elaborate treatises, gave them to the world in the form of letters. But Paul's writings were not of this kind. His letters were real letters, and to keep this fact in mind is the first step to understanding and using the Epistles rightly. When he summoned one of the professional letter-writers found in every town or, more often, asked some friend and disciple to act as his amanuensis, this was not because he wished to write a reasoned statement of his beliefs about the Atonement, or to set forth in a way which would serve all students for all time his doctrine of justification by faith. Instead of designing a treatise for the instruction of his own and future generations, he meant simply to write a letter to people whom he knew at Corinth or Philippi, and to meet what, he had gathered, were their special needs and problems at that moment.

It is, of course, obviously true that these letters contain much theological teaching, often teaching of great and permanent value. Yet it never aims at being either systematic or complete. Often it is mainly allusive. Paul had visited most of the churches to which he writes, and had taught them fully by word of mouth. Now his main purpose often is to "put them in mind of" this verbal instruction

and to reiterate points in it which they seemed in danger of forgetting. This habit of his was necessarily laid aside in writing his letter to the Roman church, because at the time he had never been in Rome. He hopes to be there before long, and, because false accounts of his teaching have already been circulated, he wishes to prepare the way for his visit by counteracting the prejudice against him which these misrepresentations have probably caused. Accordingly, he begins his letter by stating at some length what are the foundation-truths of Christianity, as he sees them. Therefore the first eleven chapters of Romans have more resemblance to a theological treatise than any other of Paul's writings which we possess. Yet not only are they exceptional, but, when examined closely, they prove to have little of that careful arrangement of material, that logical sequence of thought, which every author of an abstract theological dissertation tries to secure. There are, it is true, some passages which read as if they had been composed with assiduous care, passages perfect in structure and brought to a triumphant climax at their end. But many more are abrupt and disconnected in their arrangement. Half-way through some elaborate argument Paul stops. Some objection which an opponent may raise has suddenly occurred to him. He does not make a mental note to deal with this later on. Instead, he leaves unfinished what he is saying in order to answer at once his imaginary critic, and, having disposed of him, does not return to the theme he has left. It is conceivable that someone wishing to give the world a systematic theological treatise might dictate a first draft of it in this rather casual way, but certainly he would after-

wards revise and rearrange it in an orderly form, completing unfinished sentences, and clearing up paragraphs which in his hastily dictated draft had been obscure. But Paul does nothing of this kind, for the sufficient reason that he is not composing a theological work but writing a letter. His letters often raise points of theology because, in his view, any letter seriously discussing life and conduct must do this. But a letter which touches on this or the other theological doctrine is wrongly used if it be read, interpreted and quoted as though it were a formal and comprehensive theological work.

Every reader must be impressed by the fact that Paul draws no dividing line between theology and religion, or between religion and everyday affairs. If his readers at Rome are convinced by his theological arguments, it must follow, he suggests, that they will also take the line he indicates about such matters as paying taxes, keeping out of debt, showing hospitality, and giving unnecessary offence to vegetarians. One further example which begins, as it were, at the other end may be added. Some members of the Philippian church, he has learnt, are inclined to be quarrelsome and arrogant. He might have tried to bring them to a better frame of mind by merely extolling the virtue of humility. Instead, he takes them with him into the most profound depths of theology. In a couple of sentences, including a phrase which probably has been more discussed by theologians than any other in the Epistles, he reminds them of the example given by Christ, who humbled himself by his Incarnation and of his own will laid aside some of the attributes of his Divinity. Having enforced his point by this supreme illustration, Paul

turns back at once from theology to practical directions and to his plans for the future, because he has used theology only to help his immediate aim. And this aim is not to expound doctrine, but to end some unfortunate squabbling among the Christians of Philippi.

Again, because a Pauline Epistle is an actual letter and not a treatise, the precepts found in it must not be regarded as though they formed part of an invariable and infallible code. One expositor after another through the centuries has repeated this mistake. The directions Paul gave were shaped by the special needs at the moment of the people to whom they were given, and it by no means follows that the counsel offered to one church in its special circumstances would be identical with that offered to another church in other circumstances. Our Lord, we may believe, knew himself to be teaching future as well as his first disciples, and therefore his method was to lay down great general principles that would be permanently valid. And to deduce general principles from revealed truth is the task of the Christian moralist and theologian. Paul, on the other hand, has merely to ask himself: "What is the best advice I can send the people to whom, at the moment, I am writing?" To bear this in mind is essential to a right interpretation and use of his Epistles.

Because, once more, they are genuine letters, they are deeply coloured, as a theological treatise seldom is, by the personality of their writer. The student of Bishop Butler's great work, *The Analogy of Religion*, will gain from it knowledge of its author's conclusions about the Moral Government of God, the Opinion of Necessity, and other topics of Christian philosophy. He will note the unhurried, almost processional,

movement of Butler's prose, the consistency of his arguments, the tranquil gravity of his thought. Yet of Joseph Butler as a man he will know no more when he reaches the end of the book than he did at its beginning. Different indeed is the effect produced by the Epistles, which, if they reveal much of the Pauline theology, reveal yet more of Paul. They disclose him in a rich variety of moods, affectionate and aggressive, humble and self-assertive, liberal and intolerant. At times the thought moves slowly as it broods over profound mysteries; more often it is impetuous, as he pours out doctrine and argument, commands and advice, praise and stern rebuke. At such moments the meaning is apt to be obscured as a succession of agile thoughts try to crowd themselves into abrupt, incomplete sentences. Through these letters we see their eager, ardent, affectionate writer. And a mind so vital was always a growing mind. The whole of Paul's correspondence that we possess was probably written within ten years. Yet within that time his thought developed, and the development can be traced in his writings. Occasionally, too, he would let himself revert to the kind of argument he had learnt to use in his student days at Jerusalem, manipulating some Old Testament phrase, without regard to its context and real meaning, as dexterously as any rabbi. If he could now estimate these verbal quibbles at their true worth, he also knew that no other form of reasoning would have the same attractiveness for some of his Jewish readers. It seemed to him worth while, as he frankly said, to become all things to all men, even a rabbinical exegete to Jews who delighted in rabbinical exegesis, if by any means he could save some.

Such, then, is the bundle of Paul's correspondence which has come down to us. They are, in one sense, the business letters of a missionary who wishes to keep in touch with local churches he has helped to found or which he hopes shortly to visit. They are the challenge to his opponents of a pioneer ready to die for the cause of spiritual freedom. They are the work of a profound yet quite unsystematic theologian who cares little for theology as an abstract study, and values it when it can be used to influence life and conduct. But, beyond all else, these letters are the frank, impulsive outpouring of a remarkable mind and a noble character, of a man who reveals himself most clearly when his thoughts are concentrated upon the people to whom at the moment he is writing. He is both a saint and very fallible, a mystic and a shrewd man of affairs ; almost in a moment, his mood will change ; almost in a sentence he will pass from deep thought to homely advice. Often he will seem inconsistent, because always he is learning. And his character is revealed as one of the bravest and most resolute, one of the most sympathetic and affectionate, that this world has known.

To rediscover what these letters really are is to marvel at the misuse of them in century after century. When these highly personal messages had been retrieved from Thessalonica, Corinth, Philippi and elsewhere and had been brought together, the resulting volume was supposed to form an infallible manual of Christian theology from which a final decision on all points of doctrine could be obtained. No less was it regarded by many Christian teachers as an impersonal oracle laying down rules of conduct, so that its every precept must be supposed to have a

universal and perpetual validity. To such a purpose were turned those sentences of special advice for a special moment which Paul had hastily dictated. Even in our own day this mistaken treatment of the Epistles has some influence, too often causing them to be neglected by the general reader. He does not doubt that they have their value, but a value, he supposes, which only a trained theologian can properly appreciate. This feeling is intensified when he comes upon any of those almost innumerable volumes in which scholars, using a technical idiom, minutely examine the Epistles.

Many of these technical works are of great value, and provide studies of quite fascinating interest for students who have the leisure and equipment they require. But they should not be allowed to deter the general reader from trying to gain a close acquaintance with the Epistles in the mistaken belief that these are, in the common phrase, "beyond him". For reassurance on this point he may remember that most certainly Paul did not address his letters to a select circle of theological specialists. They were written for, they were read and understood by, ordinary men and women. No doubt they encountered in them, as the writer of 2 Peter remarked, "some things hard to be understood". No doubt, too, the lapse of nineteen centuries since they were written has made many phrases and allusions obscure which presented no difficulty to the first readers. There are puzzling sentences which various scholars of equal competence interpret differently. But these facts should not deter the average man from reading the Epistles. When he meets a passage which seems specially cryptic, his wise course, at a

first reading, will be simply to leave it and pass on. Later, he may return to it with the help that some trustworthy commentary can supply. But an occasional phrase or sentence which baffles him will not spoil the spiritual power, the interest and attractiveness, of an Epistle as a whole. What is, however, critically important is that, to repeat this essential point once more, he should approach an Epistle not as a tract, or as a collection of edifying "texts", but as a letter. Were some other collection of ancient letters placed in his hands, after a preliminary glance through them he might well say: "These look very interesting. But, if I'm to understand them, it would be a great help to know, before I examine them closely, to whom, when, where, and why they were written. Most of all, I should be glad of any available information about their writer. To have it will help me greatly when I study these letters." Such is precisely the line of approach to be taken by anyone who wishes to profit as much as possible by his reading of Paul's letters. To use every means that will help to reading them intelligently is of obvious importance, because these letters form a considerable part of the New Testament.

Therefore, as the title of this volume is intended to suggest, Paul and his letters must be studied together. The letters reveal the man; the man interprets the letters. An acquaintance with one is essential to an understanding of the other. The aim of this book is to assist the ordinary man or woman, who is neither a theologian nor a technical student of the New Testament, to read a Pauline Epistle with pleasure and intelligence, not with a full grasp of all its details, but with a clear view of its main purpose,

special character and arrangement. Casual enquiry among people who read their Bibles at home fairly often shows that in the New Testament they mostly limit themselves to the Gospels. In the Epistles they seldom venture beyond a few favourite passages, which they read without reference to their author or their context. This means that they do not know any of Paul's letters as a whole. It means also that they fail to appreciate the greatness of Paul, because, while they have vague recollections of his work as a missionary, they have not come to know him through his correspondence as a man. As some insight into the characteristics of the writer is indispensable to a just valuation of Paul's writings, it seems worth while to recall briefly the story of his development before turning to the Epistles. No attempt need be made to reconstruct anything like a full biography. We need not even examine all the information derived from Luke and Paul himself, in the hope of shaping it into an exact and orderly narrative. This is indeed a task of great and probably insuperable difficulty, which has been undertaken by an immense number of writers with varying degrees of imperfect success.⁽²¹⁾ All that concerns us here is to notice events and influences in the earlier part of Paul's life which helped to shape his personality, because a remembrance of them must be of considerable assistance in interpreting what he wrote in later years.

Paul's father was a Jew of Palestine, possibly of Jerusalem, for a daughter of his married a Jerusalem resident and still lived in that city when a boy of hers had become a young man. Then, by a happy chance, he was able to save his uncle's life.⁽²²⁾ But

Paul's parents had migrated, not long before his birth, from Palestine to Tarsus in Cilicia. Although the date cannot be given exactly, it was within ten years after the birth of Christ. The father was well-to-do ; he may have been a trader who for business reasons found it advisable to live at Tarsus. Of his own choice he would not have exchanged a home in Palestine for a setting which must have been far less congenial.

Attention has been drawn earlier in this chapter to some of the differences between the Jews of Palestine and the Jews of " the Dispersion ", scattered in groups over Asia Minor, Greece, Italy and Egypt. Aramaic was the language of the Palestinian Jews. A large number of them were bilingual and could speak Greek also, for Greek had become the common tongue of the Near East and a knowledge of it was essential for business purposes. Yet the Palestinians only used it when necessary, speaking Aramaic alone among themselves. Greek, on the other hand, was the first language of the Jews " of the Dispersion ", who in consequence were known as " Hellenists ", a convenient word for describing them. Many of them had little regard for their ancestral tongue and did not teach their children Aramaic, so that the next generation of Hellenistic Jews knew no language except Greek. Inevitably, too, as time went on the traditions of Palestine weakened among them, and, living in a pagan city, they began to be influenced by its life and culture. They had no thought of deserting their own religion. Even when the Jewish colony in a town was small in numbers, it usually contrived to erect and maintain a synagogue, with a school for the children. Yet, if

the form of service in a Palestinian and Hellenist synagogue were virtually identical, the teaching given in the one was apt to differ considerably from that heard in the other. The Palestinian's single-hearted devotion to the Law was not fully shared by the Hellenist. Like the Palestinian, the Hellenist looked for the coming of a Messiah, but, unlike the Palestinian, he was content if this coming were postponed to an indefinite future. Living in a pagan city and brought daily into touch with its people, acquaintance with them, he found, would often develop into friendship. He was specially interested by some of their philosophical doctrines, finding points of resemblance between them and the "Wisdom" literature produced by members of his own race. And the Wisdom literature suggested the possibility of a mystical element in religion which might well be combined with liberal Judaism, without those nauseous rites which accompanied mystery cults of pagan origin.

Yet, if some such point of view were adopted by many Hellenistic Jews, it was not adopted by all, and it may fairly be assumed that Paul's father was among the exceptions. He possessed Roman citizenship, the privileges of which extended to every part of the Empire, but he was also a Pharisee, a fact which, as the name implies, set him apart from ordinary Jews and set Palestine apart from all other lands in his affection. As a Pharisee, he accounted exact obedience to the Law and the Tradition as the primary duties of religion. With all his heart he must have disliked the spread of Hellenistic influence among his fellow-Jews, an influence lessening the authority of the Law which Pharisaism was pledged

to uphold. He must have been grieved when some of his fellow-countrymen in Tarsus mixed freely with the pagan inhabitants, and even in their own homes preferred to use Greek instead of their Palestinian language. This last failing at least he could refuse to imitate. In the streets and in his business premises he was compelled to use Greek. But in his own house it should be unheard; Aramaic should be the language of his home. Probably it was for this reason, as Dr. Rawlinson suggests, that Paul in after years described himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews", meaning "that his parents on both sides spoke Aramaic, and that Aramaic rather than Greek had been the language of his home".⁽²³⁾

Paul was fully justified in describing his birth-place as "no insignificant city".⁽²⁴⁾ It was the capital of Cilicia and an important centre of commerce. Cilicia was so noted for the cloth, woven of goats' hair, from which tents were made, that this was called "cilicium". A wise rule required every young Jew, irrespective of social class, to learn some manual trade, in order that he should not be resourceless if he fell on evil days. Accordingly the young Paul was taught either—the point is doubtful—the craft of weaving this cloth or tent-making itself. Long afterwards he was not a little proud of being able to earn his daily food by manual labour, so that he was self-supporting, and had no need to derive from the churches the maintenance to which, as he was careful to point out, he was fully entitled. Tarsus was a centre not only of commerce but of culture. It had a university which vied with those of Athens and Alexandria. It had been the home of many eminent philosophers. In everything but geographical

situation it was a Greek city, where Greek was the language of market and lecture-hall alike. The twin Greek ideals of intellectual and athletic vigour coloured its everyday life. This was indeed a strange setting for a Pharisee resolved to bring up his son according to the strictest code of Palestinian Judaism.

The first step, however, was easy enough. As rabbinic authority prescribed, at the age of five or six Paul would be sent daily to the synagogue school. In addition to his religious education here it was necessary, though his father may have deplored the necessity, that he should learn Greek. A colloquial knowledge of it he probably picked up, as young children will, from hearing it talked in the streets. But he must be taught to read and write this language, and, as has been remarked, "it is not likely that his parents would have allowed him to frequent a pagan school".⁽²⁵⁾ Therefore a Greek-speaking Jew was probably engaged to teach the child this accomplishment. Professor Nock, the scholar quoted in the last sentence, comments on the degree in which Paul's vocabulary and style in his letters are influenced by the Septuagint, the Greek version of the Old Testament. He points out, as "a striking phenomenon", the fact that "there is not a paragraph in Paul's writings which does not include subconscious recollections of the Greek Old Testament"; adding, "this is the more remarkable when we reflect that the Septuagint was a bulky and expensive book".⁽²⁶⁾ Perhaps Paul's father, dreading the influence of pagan literature on a youthful mind, stipulated that, if the boy must be taught to read and write Greek, no other work than the Greek version of the Old Testament should be used as the manual for his

instruction and the pattern for his imitation. This is, of course, no more than a conjecture. Yet it seems reasonable, and if Paul, at the age of twelve or fourteen, was steeped in the Septuagint, if it was his model and the one Greek book he knew, then his "subconscious recollections" of it long afterwards need not be termed a "striking phenomenon".

During these youthful years in Tarsus Paul must have learnt much that was not included in his scholastic education, and of a kind to increase his parents' anxiety. He was fascinated, as every boy would be, by the local Greek games. He talked with athletes about their training. He watched boxing and wrestling contests, and noted how a competitor who broke the rules was disqualified. He watched races, and observed how quickly a runner lost ground if he glanced backward; he saw the winner crowned. He would have been astonished indeed had he known to what use he would put those youthful memories in later years. It is easy to imagine how on his return from the games he would describe them eagerly, and how increasingly his parents dreaded the contamination of this clever, quick-witted, impressionable boy of theirs by the pagan influence to which he was now exposed. Of course he was not allowed to read the classic writers of Greece, and indeed their idiom would probably have baffled him. Yet, a disquieting symptom, he picked up a few familiar quotations from the heathen Greek poets. Already, too, he may have been heard to use sometimes in his talk a word or phrase derived from the pagan mystery cults. He did this afterwards in his letters, with an odd result in our own times. Commentators have swooped upon these few words and phrases, magnified their

significance in Paul's writings, argued that their use proves him to have been deeply versed in these mystery cults, and that under their influence, without protest from those who had been taught by Christ, he transformed Christianity into a fundamentally different kind of religion. That Paul was, in some sense, a mystic is true enough, but his mysticism was of another kind, derived from a Jewish, not a pagan source. Of this mysticism something will be said on a later page. Here it is sufficient to note that the few mystery-cult words and phrases used in Paul's letters, possibly picked up by him as a boy at Tarsus, were such as had passed into common talk. The argument built upon his use of them is as precarious as it would be to assert that everyone who speaks to-day of an "inferiority complex" must be an ardent student and disciple of Freud.

The final stage of Paul's education may well have given his parents much anxiety. Obviously, he could not be allowed to enter the university of Tarsus, but the risk of his mixing with its students was considerable. A parent need not share the Hebraic and Pharisaic austerity of Paul's father to dread the corrupting influence of Greek life upon an adolescent son. With its high intellectual culture it united a debased and perverted code of morals, a code not merely permitted to undisciplined youth, but sanctioned and adopted by leading citizens and prominent philosophers. The time had come when Paul ought to be removed from this dangerous atmosphere of paganism. Perhaps it was the head of the synagogue in Tarsus who suggested how this could be done. The boy, he was able to report, showed brilliant promise. He took immense interest in the scrip-

tures and the interpretation of the Law, he was proud of being the son of a Pharisee, and the more so because thereby he himself ranked, without the need of election, as a member of the Pharisaic fraternity. He was very fond of religious argument ; in fact, given the specialized training, he might some day become a distinguished doctor of the Law. The suggestion was welcomed. Paul should be sent to Jerusalem, where his sister and brother-in-law could take care of him. Life in Jerusalem and study in the Temple courts would be the best possible antidote for any poison of pagan or Hellenistic influence which he might have assimilated at Tarsus. And he should be entered as a pupil of Gamaliel, at the moment the most revered of all the Jerusalem teachers : " a doctor of the Law had in honour of all the people ", in Luke's phrase.

So ended the first chapter of Paul's life. The dominant influence shaping it had been that of his home. Here, in a heathen city where the relatively few Jewish settlers were of the " modernist " Greek-speaking type, his father adhered closely to the language and most rigid traditions of Palestinian Pharisaism. He must often have admonished his son to beware both of the debased practices of the Gentiles and of the debased doctrine, as he thought it, encouraged by Hellenistic Jews. This parental antipathy to Hellenism may have had its result upon Paul when he gave his vote for the killing of Stephen the Hellenist.

The Jewish " Sayings of the Fathers " ⁽²⁷⁾ prescribed that a boy should remain at his synagogue school up to the age of fifteen ; then, but not before he was fifteen, if he showed sufficient promise he

might be admitted to one of the higher Academies of the Rabbis. At this age, accordingly, it seems probable that Paul left Tarsus for Jerusalem, to sit quite literally, as Jewish students did, "at the feet of" his new teacher, the celebrated Gamaliel. Two schools of thought were found at this time among the "scribes", the teachers of the Law and Tradition, at Jerusalem. Gamaliel was the distinguished representative of the more tolerant and liberal tradition, a tradition initiated by his grandfather, Hillel. The opposite and narrower school was identified with its founder, Shammai. This does not imply that Gamaliel had any leaning towards Hellenistic Judaism. Yet, fully as he upheld the supremacy of the Law and Tradition, he was prepared to interpret them less rigorously than men of the rival school. He was better disposed than they towards the Gentiles. He was less inflexible about divorce. He urged caution upon his fellow-members of the Sanhedrin when Peter and John were haled before them, and thereby in all probability saved the apostles' lives. Some critics,⁽²⁸⁾ observing these characteristics, have solemnly argued that Paul's statement, as reported by Luke, must be unfounded. A young man who became an extreme zealot for the Law, they urge, could not possibly have studied under Gamaliel. Some more severe teacher of the Shammai school must have been Paul's instructor at Jerusalem. Yet all that this argument proves is how easily technical learning can be combined with a profound ignorance of youthful human nature! The rabbis gave most of their teaching by means of what would now be termed "discussion classes". Difficult points of scriptural exegesis would be propounded. The

judgment of one authority would be compared with that of another, in seeming conflict with it. Above all, problems of casuistry would be discussed. What ought a pious Jew to do in this or the other imagined circumstances in order to comply with the Law and the Tradition? Brisk argument followed; the pupils were eager to display their skill as debaters. Any-one was welcome to try conclusions not only with his fellow-students but with the rabbi. Given a clever boy of Paul's temperament, almost inevitably he would side against his master rather than with him, would prefer the extremist to the moderate view, and would do this the more eagerly if he found that the opinion supported by the master was at variance with that which he had learnt from his father at home.

We may well believe Paul's statement, "I advanced in the Jews' religion beyond many of mine own countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers". It might seem at first that much of Gamaliel's teaching, and, in particular, his wise counsels of tolerance, had been without effect upon this fiery young pupil. Yet among the most encouraging rewards of a teacher's work is to discover, perhaps after many years, that the things he said to a pupil seemingly impervious did, in fact, make a deep impression. Advice which was disregarded or even ridiculed at the time was remembered with gratitude long afterwards, and perhaps influenced the pupil decisively at some turning-point in his life. A time would come when Paul would tell his fellow-Christians to "let their moderation be known unto all men", when, too, he himself overcame his naturally impatient temper, showing wonderful broad-mindedness and tolerance, and extolling

love as the supreme virtue. And then perhaps, after an interval of many years, the seed sown by Gamaliel was bearing its harvest.

Naturally enough, it has occurred to many people to wonder if Paul saw our Lord at Jerusalem. A belief that he did has been elaborated in various ways ; one writer,⁽²⁹⁾ for instance, thinks that the " rich young ruler " who came to Christ was no other than Paul. He ends his study with the assertion that " the words and thoughts which he had heard from the lips of Jesus were to the apostle [Paul] the current coin of his daily utterance ". But fanciful theories of this type involve great difficulties, and are wholly unsupported by any real evidence. Other writers, without going to this length, are confident that at least Paul must have seen our Lord during the time of his earthly ministry, and not only in the vision on the road to Damascus. Any different belief, observed a critic of great eminence in his day,⁽³⁰⁾ " is definitely contradicted by the express statement of the apostle himself in 2 Cor. v, 16 ". The R.V. translation of this verse is : " Wherefore we henceforth know no man after the flesh : even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now we know him so no more ". But the words must be interpreted with due regard to their context. They form part of an argument, and a sudden announcement slipped into it that Paul had seen Christ on earth would be both startling and irrelevant. The real meaning of the phrase and its place in Paul's logical sequence of thought seem clear enough. Christ's death and resurrection, he has been saying, give us a new set of values, a spiritual standard replacing the former human criterion. This changes our estimate

even of Christ himself. The *Twentieth Century New Testament* translation of the phrase is : " Even if we once thought of Christ from the standpoint of the world, yet now we do so no longer ". Dr. Hayman translates : " If by such a standard we have estimated even Christ, yet our estimate of Him too has wholly altered now ". And Dr. Moffatt : " though I once estimated Christ by what is external, yet I no longer estimate Him thus ", taking Paul's " we " as meaning simply " I ", which often it does. But the plural here may be deliberate, and, if one more suggestion may be added, it is that the thought implied by the words runs : " though we, we Jews who have become Christians, once thought of Christ according to the human and mistaken Messianic ideas, yet now, after His death and resurrection, we do this no more ".

The point need not be discussed further. Enough has been said to show how hazardous is the confident assertion, based on this verse in 2 Corinthians, that Paul saw our Lord during the years of his earthly ministry. There is no real evidence that he did. Equally, there is no conclusive evidence that he did not. The balance of probability seems against it. If he did, we should expect to find unambiguous and frequent allusions to the meeting in Paul's letters and sermons, and perhaps the question on the Damascus road, " Who art thou ? " becomes difficult to explain. Yet the point cannot be definitely decided, one way or the other.

We have no precise information about Paul from the time when he became Gamaliel's pupil to the time when he was an approving witness of Stephen's murder. This may represent an interval of some fifteen years, between the ages of fifteen and thirty

When he had finished his course as a pupil, possibly he became a teacher. This would account for the fact that he seems to have been unmarried, for students and teachers of the Law were specifically exempt from the custom which made marriage almost a matter of religious obligation for young men of the Jewish race. His own summary of his life before his conversion and his division of it into two parts, "among mine own nation and at Jerusalem",⁽³¹⁾ suggests that he remained at Jerusalem for some considerable period. And he became increasingly known as a zealous Pharisee, with an intense devotion to an exclusive creed, who lived "after the straitest sect of our religion".

It is unnecessary to re-tell here the familiar story of Stephen's arrest and martyrdom. A close study of the speech attributed to him by Luke will show how far it is from being, as casual readers are apt to think it, a dull outline of Jewish history. It is, on the contrary, a masterpiece of its kind, as adroit in its selection of evidence as it is unanswerable in its logic. But our present aim is to study Paul's character in order that we may the better understand his letters. As an aid to a right estimate of his character we have observed some of the factors which had a part in shaping it. Among them we have noticed the influence of his father and his home life, the influence of the synagogue and city of Tarsus, the influence of Gamaliel and Jerusalem. But in any such list no student of psychology will hesitate to give an important place to Stephen. The day when Paul first saw Stephen may well have been the day when the process which led to his conversion began. Among

those "disputing with Stephen" (32) in the synagogues, writes Luke, were men from Cilicia, residing in Jerusalem. No man from Cilicia would be more prominent in such arguments than the brilliant young Pharisee whose birthplace was Tarsus. Stephen's opponents, it is said, "were not able to withstand the wisdom and the Spirit by which he spake", so that Paul for the first time had the unwelcome experience of finding himself worsted in debate. This would not lessen his bitterness towards one who seemed to speak exasperating blasphemy. Paul the Pharisee became Paul the fanatic. He was among the infuriated mob which killed Stephen. Afterwards he found himself unable to banish the recollection of that scene. He was haunted by memories of the victim, of his look, his dying prayer. A most unexpected doubt began to whisper; what if Stephen, after all, were right? He tried to silence that whisper; it persisted and grew louder. His conscience pricked him: he kicked vainly against its pricks. Action alone, he felt, and violent action, might free him from these terrible misgivings. He would attack the Christians more fiercely than before. This he did, but gained no peace for his mind. When no more Christians remained in Jerusalem, he would hunt his prey in Damascus. And then, while he mused as he rode towards that city, the great event happened. He wondered no longer; he knew. What had seemed incredible was the truth: the crucified Jesus was indeed the Divine Christ. All things were become new, all the old values and standards were swept away. Paul was transformed; life, death and eternity were transfigured.

Discussion about the exact nature of Paul's

experience on the Damascus road has been endless, and quite unprofitable. The decisions reached do not depend upon the evidence, which is inadequate to justify any decision as final, but upon the prepossessions of those who examine it. Some absurd theories, no doubt, may be confidently dismissed. To argue that Paul's conversion can be explained as no more than the result of a sunstroke or an epileptic fit—views which have been gravely maintained—is, in plain English, to talk nonsense. Science at least requires us to believe that any definite result must have had an adequate causal factor to produce it, and to allege that a fit or a sunstroke is sufficient to account for the kind of man Paul consistently was and the kind of life he consistently lived until his death some thirty-five years later, is grotesque. More plausibly it is suggested that a man of Paul's highly-strung temperament at a period of intense mental strain might easily believe that he saw an illuminating light and the form of the Divine Lord and heard his voice. Actual as it seemed to Paul, the vision was really subjective, the product of subconscious auto-suggestion. Paul, we are asked to note, was liable to psychological experiences of this kind; in his writings he mentions a number of "visions" which he took as the means of Divine guidance. Yet it may again be doubted whether a purely subjective vision of this type can account for the permanent change in Paul's creed and character, or for his steady and serene outlook. Those familiar with religious hallucinations know how transient their effect is apt to be, and that the mood of exaltation they induce is commonly followed by one of deep depression. People unable to believe that at special

moments the supernatural may enter into and modify the natural order of the universe are bound to explain in some such way the event on the Damascus road. Others, however, do not feel this difficulty. They are able to believe, as Paul certainly believed, that his experience had an objective reality, that he was permitted to see the Lord and to hear his voice. But, as opinions will always differ and the matter is incapable of proof, argument about it is futile. What is certain is that Paul underwent a real and great spiritual experience which radically transformed his future ; the exact nature of the experience is, after all, a minor point.

The chronology of the period following his conversion is obscure, because the two summaries of it, in Acts and Galatians, are difficult to reconcile. But their seeming discrepancies are unimportant, and have no bearing upon an interpretation of Paul's character. A point of more significance is that although he had received—as then and ever afterwards he was sure—a direct call from God, this did not, in his view, make baptism superfluous, and after his conversion he was formally admitted into the Christian society by the accustomed rite. On the other hand, he held that the call on the Damascus road had conferred on him full apostleship. Therefore when he preached the Gospel, it would not be as one taught and appointed by Peter, James or any other human being, but as one directly commissioned by God himself. On this he insists emphatically in his Galatian letter. After his conversion, he states, he wished not to confer “ with flesh and blood ”, and accordingly withdrew into Arabia, no doubt for solitary prayer, study and reflection. Afterwards he

was in Damascus for some considerable time, at the end of which he had to make a hurried escape to save his life. There followed a fortnight's visit to Peter in Jerusalem, and it is easy to guess with what eagerness he listened when Peter described the Crucifixion and Resurrection appearances of our Lord. What he thus "received" was to become afterwards, as he said, the foreground of the Gospel he "delivered". Perhaps he also questioned for himself some of those witnesses, "above five hundred" in number, to whom simultaneously the Risen Lord had manifested himself. In Jerusalem as in Damascus, according to Luke's account, there was a plot to assassinate Paul, "but when the brethren were aware of it, they escorted him to [the port of] Caesarea, and sent him forth to Tarsus". So Paul returned to his native town. If his parents were still living, it would be interesting to know how they received him, and if he were able to make them also exchange rigid Pharisaism for the Christian faith. It should be remembered that Paul, especially in these earlier days, viewed Christianity not as the negation of Judaism, but rather as its logical development and fulfilment. The Law, he maintained, had its part in the Divine scheme. Its usefulness was preparatory, "to bring us unto Christ". When this was accomplished, its task was done. Its cramping and mechanical restrictions had no further value. To exalt and to cling to them still was to prefer formalism to faith, and fetters to freedom. It was along this line of logical development that Paul would argue with any Palestinian Jew, his father or another, whose acceptance of Christianity he was attempting to gain.

The first chapter of the Galatian letter supplies Paul's own account of his movements at this time. He insists, for a reason that will become clear when we study the letter, that this account is absolutely accurate. "Behold, before God, I lie not" is his characteristic interpolation in the midst of his narrative. In this account he states that from Jerusalem he travelled into "the regions of Syria and Cilicia". This sentence has perplexed many commentators. It implies, they argue, that he visited Syria first and Cilicia afterwards, while the narrative in Acts makes him proceed at once to Tarsus, which was in Cilicia. Yet the explanation, as Sir William Ramsay pointed out,⁽³³⁾ is simple enough. In describing territories Paul does not use their Greek names as countries but their Roman names as provinces. Syria and Cilicia together formed a single Roman province, so that "Syria-Cilicia" would be preferable to "Syria and Cilicia" as the English equivalent of Paul's term. Such a point may seem too trivial for mention here. It happens, however, to illustrate a factor that cannot be neglected in any right estimate of Paul's personality. This was the influence of his Roman citizenship. The fact that it was inherited shows Paul's father to have been a man of some position and wealth, for in the first century Roman citizenship was an honour by no means indiscriminately bestowed. And the parent must have had substantial means who could afford, instead of putting his son to work, to send him across the sea to Jerusalem as the pupil of its most famous rabbi, whose fees may have been proportionate to his fame. But it was when Paul began to travel through various parts of the Roman Empire that the greatness of the Empire,

the efficiency of its administrative system, and the value of his privileges as its citizen became apparent to him. The average Palestinian Jew, domiciled in his own land and seldom if ever leaving it, frankly detested the Empire. In his eyes it was a usurping power whose corrupt officials beggared him by their financial demands. Other people within the Empire did not suffer in the same degree ; the Jew alone was burdened by a dual system of taxation. His own religious leaders demanded from him large taxes and offerings ; it was in addition to these that he had to give tribute to Caesar.

Paul, on the contrary, staunchly upheld the rights of Rome's government. He assured his followers that criminals alone had reason to fear the magistrates. "The powers that be are ordained of God", he held. The Christian should cheerfully pay what the State required of him, the tribute-money to one official, customs duties to another, honour to whom honour ; although when the words were written the king to be honoured was Nero. But Nero, if already famous, was not yet infamous, and the persecutions of Christianity by Rome had not begun. All the attacks on Paul and plots against his life were instigated by men of his own race. From Roman officials, on the contrary, he often received "no little kindness". Gallio provided one example, when he indignantly declined to pervert justice and to condemn Paul in order to gratify his Jewish enemies. Paul's mind was of the type which instinctively dislikes slovenliness and inefficiency. He wished things to be done decently and in order, and, as a citizen of the Empire, observed with pride its carefully planned administrative system, its method of rule by

delegated authority, its high regard for discipline. His own genius as a successful organizer has always been recognized. But when he was establishing his local churches, appointing officers who would supervise them in his absence and correspondents who would report their progress ; when, too, he worked to create among these local churches a sense of their membership in a society common to them all, he was skilfully adapting for his own use the methods of imperial Rome.

In Syria-Cilicia he seems to have remained for at least twelve and possibly fourteen years. No doubt he travelled much, preaching the Gospel to the many settlements of Hellenistic Jews which were scattered over this wide territory. Of all these many years not one incident is recorded. Yet it is perhaps not impossible to discover traces of their influence on Paul. Through them he was living for the first time on intimate terms with " Hellenists ". Something has been said on an earlier page of the difference between these Greek-speaking Jews " of the Dispersion " and the Aramaic-speaking Jews of Palestine. As a small boy, Paul must necessarily have met many Hellenists in Tarsus. Then he was too young to discuss the points of difference between their Judaism and that of his home, and such talk certainly would not have been encouraged by his father ! But now in Syria-Cilicia he must have been profoundly interested in their beliefs. He would be at pains to show that these, no less than the more rigid creed of Palestinian Judaism, found a real completion in Christianity. From the Hellenists, perhaps, he acquired that slight acquaintance with Stoic philosophy of which there are occasional signs in his

letters. Far more attractive to him would be that infusion of mysticism into Judaism which had spread through the East from Alexandria. It would appeal to one who had a strong mystical element in his own nature. It had no real affinity with the mystery cults of paganism, and there seemed no reason why it should be abandoned by those who accepted Christianity. This faith, indeed, was enriched by a doctrine of mystical union with Christ, so that the believer could say "it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me".

On the other hand, attempts to show that Paul's sacramental teaching was derived from the pagan mystery cults have broken down.⁽³⁴⁾ Two works published by the late Professor Bousset in 1913 suggested that the Christianity to which Paul was converted differed widely from Christianity as believed by the apostles in Jerusalem. It was the product of Damascus, Antioch and other places, a religion in which Christian doctrine was strangely blended with pagan myths. If we ask for one shred of evidence to show that the Christian creed of Damascus differed in this fundamental way from the Christian creed of Jerusalem, we ask in vain. If we enquire how so great a change in the Christian faith could have been made and widely accepted before the day of Paul's conversion, which was within a couple of years of our Lord's Resurrection, there is no satisfying answer. When Paul reported at Jerusalem the teaching he had given as a missionary, it was fully approved by the apostles there. This, if the message had been semi-pagan, was indeed remarkable. The strange theory had further developments which need not be examined here. To make

any reference to it has only seemed worth while because years after a bizarre theory of this type has been abandoned by competent scholars, inaccurate reminiscences of it are still apt to figure in "popular" attacks on Christianity.

But the theory that Pauline sacramental doctrine had its origin in the pagan mystery cults hardly needs technical knowledge for its refutation. How untenable it is will be evident to anyone who studies closely Paul's character and writings. The first chapter of Romans shows how he viewed paganism. The earlier of the Corinthian letters we possess shows what he thought of a "syncretistic" religion—of attempts, that is, to blend Christianity with other creeds. When some people at Corinth wished to participate in both the Christian and the pagan sacraments, "ye cannot drink the Lord's cup and the cup of devils" ⁽³⁵⁾ was his outspoken and sufficient comment. The supposed parallels between Christian and pagan rites have broken down, because they were derived from conjecture rather than from evidence. Even if they had not been, an essential difference would remain. Fragmentary though our acquaintance with the mystery cults is, it may be said, in general terms, that in them the life or strength of the deity was thought to be communicated through the sacrificial victim to the initiate. It was, so to speak, an impersonal and virtually mechanical process. Very different, in Paul's view, was the Christian sacrament. This, in the phrase of the Anglican catechism, was a "means of grace", but it was also a symbol—and it was a means of grace because it was a symbol, a symbol of that ultimate reality, the personal love between Christ and his disciple. The

worshipped Christ, the Christ whose grace was sacramentally bestowed, was the Christ "who loved me and gave himself for me". "There", it has been well said, "lies the basis of Paul's religion; there lies the basis of all of Christianity." (36) For any such conception as this of a fellowship through personal love paganism may be searched in vain.

At the end of the twelve or fourteen unrecorded years in Syria-Cilicia Paul was at Antioch. Thence, with Barnabas and Mark, he set out on what the school books describe as his "first missionary journey", which is more likely to have been his twentieth. At Perga Mark left them. No doubt he had heard from Paul of the new departure which the apostle was about to make—and was profoundly shocked by it. But at Paul's next halting-place, the Pisidian Antioch, any doubt still in his mind was ended by the open hostility of the Jews. "We turn to the Gentiles", he said. The great decision was made. Paul's work among his fellow-countrymen was finished. His mission to the Gentiles, the supreme accomplishment of his life, was about to begin. On earlier pages of this chapter something was said to show how high a courage was needed to make this change, and how profoundly its consequences were destined to affect the whole subsequent history of the Christian faith and indeed of mankind. There is no need to insist again upon these truths. But with the beginning of his work among the Gentiles we have reached also the beginning of the period to which belong Paul's surviving letters. Any detailed study of the events in this and the remaining periods of his life would be beyond the scope of this volume. It is not even as an incomplete biography that the present

chapter has been written. Its single aim is to assist the reader to examine Paul's letters with that improved understanding that is derived from a closer acquaintance with their writer. Accordingly we have noticed the principal influences which shaped Paul's thought and character, because to recognize the effect of these influences when we look through the letters will make them seem more interesting, more human and more intelligible.

What, then, as we end this preliminary study and pass from the writer to his writings, is to be our estimate of Paul the Apostle? It is more likely to be accurate if we keep in mind the influences of his early and impressionable years—the home life, Tarsus and its synagogue, Jerusalem and the rabbinic school, Gamaliel, Stephen, the Damascus road, the clear sense of vocation, the Roman Empire, Syria-Cilicia and Hellenist mysticism. When we find his scriptural arguments tiresome, forced and pedantic, we shall remember how deeply ingrained in him was the rabbinic tradition. When he seems to attach undue importance to small details of church order, we shall know that the speaker is a Roman citizen who has seen in how large a degree efficient administration depends upon strict discipline. When he is too vehement in speech, not merely stern but truculent in denouncing his opponents, we recollect the provocation he had received from their intrigues, and at times from violence which had both scarred his body and lacerated his heart.

And how small seem his faults when they are contrasted with the greatness of his character! It may safely be said that no-one, of whatever nationality, social class or beliefs, ever met Paul without being

impressed by the tremendous force of his personality. He might be welcomed as a wise spiritual teacher, he might be denounced as a mischievous revolutionary, but he could never be dismissed as insignificant. The tribute paid to him by a distinguished lawyer is just: ⁽³⁷⁾ "he came to the front everywhere, instantly his claim was recognized even by his keenest antagonists, and his own humility and devotion did not blind him to a consciousness of his own pre-eminence. A youthful fanatic among the rabbis, he springs at once into the foremost place as a persecutor. Received as a penitent into the Christian Church, he soon overshadows even the Apostles who had been the companions of the Lord." This force, this flame-like vitality, was due to the passionate intensity of his convictions. Always there is power in a man who is absolutely sure of his creed, who sacrifices himself unhesitatingly for its sake, who is positive that nothing else in the world can be compared in importance with the task of persuading other people to accept and to shape their lives by its truth. Paul was in the happy position of being quite certain about his beliefs. No qualifying clauses, no such word as "perhaps", will be found in his writings. If he is a persecutor, he must persecute more ruthlessly than anyone else. If he is a preacher of the Gospel, no sacrifice required by this work—comfort, health, liberty, life itself—is worth taking into account. This spirit of utter self-forgetfulness and devotion was the source of his unsurpassed courage.

Leisurely scholars in comfortable libraries are tempted to scrutinize and criticize Paul's letters as though these had been produced in similar conditions. They demur to the abruptness of the style, to

a want of logical sequence in the thought. These needless obscurities, they feel, should have been cleared up. The writer should have arranged his material in a more orderly fashion before beginning to write, or at least should have revised his letter carefully before despatching it. Instead of examining Paul's writings in this spirit, it is well to remember what kind of life their writer had to lead, and in what kind of circumstances they were produced. Paul gives us his own summary. He had been stoned, eight times he had been flogged, three times shipwrecked, for twenty-four hours adrift in an open boat; his life had been in danger from floods, bandits, enemies of his own and other races, in cities, at sea; he was worn out by manual labour, by sleepless nights, by lack of sleep, food and clothing, and he was afflicted by some chronic illness which he terms his "thorn in the flesh". That was the kind of life he lived, and in the intervals between such experiences these letters of his were written.

One of his most remarkable characteristics was the degree in which he combined his championship of religious liberty with an abhorrence of laxity. "He had no patience with merely stereotyped religion," it has been observed, "with frozen beliefs, petrified virtues, the doing of things simply because the fathers did them. He was able to discriminate between the core of spiritual religion and its accidental externalities. He knew what mattered and what did not, and it was a circumstance of the profoundest importance that there was such a one to come forward at this critical time in the history and fortunes of Christianity to emancipate it from its wrappings of Jewish traditionalism."⁽³⁸⁾ Yet, when all tributes

of this nature have been paid, more remains to be said. In his own day Paul was not only revered as a leader and organizer; he was loved as a man and a friend. When in his writings we have met the redoubtable combatant, we pass on to discover his charm, his unfailing sympathy, his eagerness to praise, his wonderful tact, his power of encouraging the diffident, his ironic and playful banter, and, beyond all else, the wealth of personal affection which he both received and bestowed. No-one has ever shown more convincingly what friendship at its best can mean. Even when we view him from a distance of nineteen centuries, Paul the Apostle may well seem to us not only one of the wisest of teachers but one of the most lovable of men.

To place him, in the modern fashion, among the less attractive characters of the Bible merely shows our acquaintance with him to be lamentably slight. On the other hand, to gain an accurate sense of his personality, to feel that we know him not merely as a kind of Christian oracle but as a human being, may well make the Epistles less baffling and more interesting than they seemed before. Having attempted, however imperfectly, this preliminary stage, we will now pass from Paul to his Epistles, from the writer to his writings.

REFERENCES AND NOTES

- (1) W. R. Inge, *Outspoken Essays*, p. 229.
- (2) Chrysostom, εἰ καὶ Παῦλος ἦν, ἀλλ' ἀνθρώπος ἦν.
- (3) Acts xxiii, 6, 7 ; xxiv, 21.
- (4) Gal. vi, 15 (Moffatt's translation).
- (5) 1 Cor. ix, 20.
- (6) Acts xxi, 24.
- (7) Acts xiii, 46.
- (8) Gal. ii, 9.
- (9) H. Weinelt, *St. Paul, the Man and his Work*, p. 223.
- (10) F. G. Peabody, *The Apostle Paul and the Modern World*, p. 62.
- (11) Horace, *Sat.* i, 143. But Matt. xxiii, 15 ("ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte") must not be misapplied. The words were addressed to the Pharisees, and this proselytizing was not to make Jews of Gentiles but to make Pharisees of Jews.
- (12) Schürer, *The Jewish People in the Time of Jesus Christ*, vol. ii, 2, p. 291.
- (13) Gal. ii, 21.
- (14) Gal. ii, 14.
- (15) *E.g.* Edersheim and Schürer.
- (16) *E.g.* C. G. Montefiore.
- (17) W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of Jerusalem*, p. 149.
- (18) Phil. iii, 12.
- (19) A. Schweitzer, *The Mysticism of Paul the Apostle*, p. 51.
- (20) 1 Ep. of Clement, 47 (Bishop Lightfoot's translation).
- (21) Professor Peabody (of Harvard) in the preface of his book on St. Paul (published in 1923) mentions that "the Library of the Theological School at Harvard contains more than two thousand volumes dealing with the life and letters of the Apostle Paul".
- (22) Acts xxiii, 16-23.
- (23) A. E. J. Rawlinson, *The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ* (Bampton Lectures), p. 85.
- (24) Acts xxi, 39.
- (25) A. D. Nock, *St. Paul*, p. 27.
- (26) *Ibid.*, pp. 236, 237.
- (27) Quoted by Edersheim, *Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, vol. i, p. 232.
- (28) *E.g.* Hansrath.
- (29) A. M. Pope, in *The Expositor*, April 1924.
- (30) J. Weiss, *Paul and Jesus* (Chaytor's translation), p. 41. The same view was supported later by J. H. Moulton, Anderson Scott and others.

- (31) Acts xxvi, 4 (R.V.).
- (32) Acts vi, 9.
- (33) W. Ramsay, *Historical Commentary on Galatians*, p. 275.
- (34) The fourth of A. E. J. Rawlinson's Bampton Lectures (*The New Testament Doctrine of the Christ*) supplies a succinct but convincing refutation of Bousset. Among the best of the books dealing with this subject at full length may be mentioned one comparatively little known in this country: *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, by Professor Machen of Cornell University.
- (35) 1 Cor. x, 21.
- (36) *The Origin of Paul's Religion*, p. 317.
- (37) Sir Christopher Johnston, K.C., *St. Paul and his Mission to the Roman Empire*, p. 18.
- (38) H. Bulcock, *The Passing and the Permanent in St. Paul*, p. 225.

II. THE LETTERS

TEN of Paul's letters which have come down to us seem to have been written within a period of ten years, approximately from A.D. 50 to 60. The " Pastoral Epistles " to Timothy and Titus are outside this list ; they present a special problem which must be considered separately. The ten can be divided into " missionary " and " captivity " letters, because the earlier six—I and 2 Thessalonians, Galatians, 1 and 2 Corinthians and Romans—were written within the period of his missionary travels among the Gentiles ; the later four—Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philippians—were written during the two years of his detention at Rome. All but one of these ten letters belong to what may be termed Paul's official correspondence. They were addressed not to individuals but to various Christian churches, they were intended for public reading, and they had that special authority which Paul claimed for himself as an apostle. The one exception is Philemon, a private and wholly personal letter. Its inclusion in the Bible may well be a source of satisfaction to us, but there can be no doubt that it would have considerably astonished Paul.

Even to glance through the letters is to be reminded of the heroic industry and self-denial which their production must have involved. As for many other people, letter-writing may well have been at times an intense pleasure to Paul, and at other times an exceed-

ingly unwelcome task. At the strain it imposed he hints when he rounds off a list of the trials he has to undergo with "that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches". "Daily" and "all" are significant words. Little imagination is needed to realize how crowded Paul's time must have been in whatever town he was visiting. He had to preach, often to an audience far from docile or silent. He had to reason with opponents, some of them merely sceptical, others ready enough, unless adroitly handled, to use violence as their final argument. He had to strengthen weak and hesitating believers. There would be a stream of callers requiring private interviews, to discuss some local church difficulty, to air grievances, to obtain both spiritual and mundane advice about their private affairs. The little Christian society he had brought together would have to be organized, so as to secure its continuance and well-being when he himself had departed to his next stopping-place. Careful choice would have to be made of suitable people for special duties. In addition to all these tasks, Paul thought it necessary to earn his daily food by manual labour, probably as a weaver. On this point he was acutely and perhaps needlessly sensitive. He was resolved that nowhere, if he could help it, should any church have the chance of saying: "Although we were glad enough to have Paul with us, the cost of his maintenance was rather a strain on our church finance". In one letter after another he insists that he was fully entitled to claim such support, but had refused to take advantage of this right, preferring to work with his hands.

Days such as these would not seem to leave any margin of time for correspondence, yet this alone

must have made heavy demands on his energies. In his pastoral work it was impossible for him to think only of the people among whom, at the moment, he was living, in order to concentrate on their problems. The care, not of one, but of "all the churches" burdened him "daily". Among his most pressing duties, he felt, was that of keeping in touch with all the scattered local churches he had founded or helped to found. As their number increased his responsibilities became more onerous. From one place, perhaps, he had not heard for many months, but there were disquieting rumours about the church there. At the first opportunity he must send a letter of enquiry and warning. A traveller from another place reported that here the Christians were facing persecution with fine courage. Impossible not to write at once to say with what profound gratitude Paul had heard of their loyalty to the cause of Christ. Frequent letters came to him which called for replies. Perhaps the elders of one church wanted to know when he would visit them again. He was greatly needed; various little difficulties had arisen, and some Euodia had again begun to quarrel with a Syntyche. But doubtless a visit from Paul would put everything right. When might they expect him? Other churches sent questions on points of difficulty—I Corinthians is an example of such a letter—which required full and careful answers. Questions about doctrine, questions about church order, questions about marriage, questions about relations with the heathen—these and a vast number of other problems, great and small, were put before him. When there were differences of opinion in any one of the local churches, no doubt the obvious course

seemed to be a letter to Paul, inviting his judgment. Then, as in later ages, enquirers did not always pause to consider how severe a demand they were making on the time and strength of an overworked man.

To keep in mind the fatigue which this part of his work must have imposed on the apostle will be to gain an increased admiration of his letters. If they had to be dictated at the end of an exhausting day, if they had to repeat advice given many times before, and to supply questioners with answers that should have been self-evident, there is no trace of weariness or impatience in these writings. They represent, of course, no more than a very small proportion of his official correspondence. Quantities of his communications were not preserved; either they perished by accident, or it did not occur to the churches which received them that they would be of permanent value. Many, no doubt, were far shorter than those which survived, or were concerned only with matters of transient or purely local interest. Even the letters we have, however, make it certain that there were others which we have not. In what we term the "first" Epistle to the Corinthians, verse 9 of chapter v refers to an earlier letter sent by Paul to Corinth. And what appears in the Bible as the "second" Epistle to the same church contains, in the opinion of most scholars, one complete letter and portions of two others. Further, in addition to his work of this character, Paul must have had a large private correspondence. To many of his acquaintances he could send no more than a word of greeting at the end of an official letter to their church. But to some intimate friend we may suppose that he often addressed a separate letter, as he did to Philemon, which would

be conveyed by the messenger to whom had been entrusted also the official letter to the local church.

On such personal arrangements with messengers correspondents had to rely for the delivery of their missives. The only approach to a postal service in the first century was reserved for the conveyance of Imperial documents. But facilities for travel under the Roman Empire were excellent, and were fully used. There was a vast amount of international trade. Even when a letter had to cross the sea to reach its destination, its writer would seldom have to wait long before finding someone who was about to make the voyage on business. As an act of friendship or for a modest fee, he would consent to include the letter in his baggage. A fact which vastly helped trade, travel and correspondence was that at this time—although many countries (like Italy itself and Palestine) also used their native tongues—the vernacular Greek of the period was written and spoken in virtually every part of the Roman Empire. It was a fact which likewise made missionary work far easier than otherwise it could have been. When, too, at a later time the Gospels were written, copied and circulated, their influence spread with a rapidity that was only possible because the language in which they were written was everywhere understood.

The spiritual genius of the men who wrote the New Testament Epistles, among whom Paul stands pre-eminent, created a new kind of literature. There is not even a faint resemblance between them and the mass of contemporary documents that has survived. Yet the belief, generally accepted through centuries, that in the New Testament age writing itself was a rare accomplishment, restricted to a small educated

class, is now untenable. It has been disproved by the reappearance of thousands of documents, or of portions of documents; immensely varied in character and written by people of all conditions. The inhabitants of Egypt at this period did not burn their "waste paper". Instead, they piled it in heaps outside the towns or villages—heaps that sometimes rose to a height of twenty feet or more. Then the dry sand began to drift over rolled documents, over sheets and torn scraps of writing. It concealed them, it preserved unharmed through century after century the slender and brittle material of which they were composed. Not until the last years of the nineteenth century was any large quantity of them brought to light or their historical and Biblical value recognized. Some of the most recent discoveries are among those of the highest interest. About 1930 an almost complete collection of Paul's letters, as contained in the New Testament, was found, and its date is about A.D. 200—a century and a half earlier than that of the *Codex Sinaiticus*. In 1935 a tiny fragment was identified as coming from a copy of the Fourth Gospel; the experts are able to say that it could not have been written later than A.D. 150—and the most probable date of the Gospel itself is only sixty years earlier. But by far the greater part of the documents brought to light are domestic in character. They include large numbers of simple letters about family affairs, legal agreements, bills, notices from officials, marketing lists and so forth. Being written in Greek of the same kind as that used in the New Testament, they have thrown light on the meaning of many words previously supposed to occur in the New Testament alone. Dr. Milligan's preface to the

invaluable Hope-Milligan *Vocabulary of the Greek Testament* supplies some striking illustrations of this point, while the general reader will find that both the letterpress and photographs of Sir Frederic Kenyon's *Our Bible and the Ancient Manuscripts* are of extreme interest, and reveal the importance of recent discoveries.

Among their incidental gains, as Sir Frederic Kenyon and Dr. Milligan show, is a more accurate idea of the manner in which Paul's letters were written and of their appearance when they were ready to be despatched. At the appointed hour Paul's amanuensis would appear with his writing materials. The ink was made of charcoal, gum and water, compounded so skilfully that after nearly two thousand years enough of the colour remains to make the writing legible. The pen was a reed, cut and trimmed to a point like a quill. The material to be written upon was manufactured from the pith of papyrus, a plant growing beside the Nile. In texture and colour it was not unlike the smooth whitish-brown paper used in modern times by shopkeepers as a wrapping for parcels. Papyrus could be bought either in separate sheets or in rolls. The average size of a single sheet for private use was about ten inches by five. The rolls were composed of a number of sheets joined together by the maker. A purchaser would choose a roll suitable in length for the composition he intended to write on it. A single sheet would have been enough for the Philemon letter. 2 Thessalonians, according to Sir F. Kenyon's calculations, would fill a small roll about fifteen inches in length, while Romans would require one of

eleven feet six inches. No less than thirty-one feet would have to be the length of a roll large enough to contain the Gospel of Luke. The writing was not continued in long lines across the papyrus; it was set down in narrow columns, each about three inches wide, and there might be five such parallel columns running down the roll, with an interval of an inch or two between them. Many words would be written in a contracted form. There was no punctuation, no division into chapters and verses, and no space between words. Omitting any attempt to reproduce contractions, the corresponding result for an English reader would be to find the two opening verses of the Galatian epistle presented to him in this form:

PAULANAPOSTLENOTOFMEN
NEITHERBYMANBUTBYJESUS
CHRISTANDGODTHEFATHER
WHORAISEDHIMFROMTHEDEAD
ANDALLTHEBRETHRENWHICH
AREWITHMEUNTOTHECHURCHES
OFGALATIA . . .

When the end of the letter was almost reached, Paul would take the pen from the hand of the scribe and add a few words in his own handwriting. He mentions this habit in 2 Thessalonians iii, 17, which runs, in Dr. Moffatt's translation: "The salutation is in my own hand, Paul's: that is a mark in every letter of mine". Obviously he feared that his unscrupulous opponents might circulate forged letters purporting to come from him (which in Thessalonica seems actually to have happened), and, as a precaution, autographed in this way each genuine letter. At the end of Galatians he repeats in his own hand and in emphatic capitals a summary

of the truth which this epistle was designed to enforce. The translation of Gal. vi, 11 in our Authorized Version, "Ye see how large a letter I have written unto you with mine own hand", is unfortunate, for the real meaning is, "Notice what big letters I use when I add these sentences in my own hand". Probably enough Philemon, being a short private letter, was a "holograph"—*i.e.* in Paul's handwriting throughout; but it may safely be assumed that all the others were dictated. Once, in the chapter of "greetings" appended to Romans, the amanuensis contrived to slip in a little message on his own account. Perhaps while Paul hesitated for a moment, wondering if there were other people he had forgotten to name, his secretary inserted the words, "I, Tertius, who wrote this epistle, salute you in the Lord". How little can he have dreamed as he did this that he was erecting a memorial to himself that would endure for thousands of years!

When the letter was finished, the papyrus on which it was written would be rolled up tightly, and either tied with thread or fastened with a clay seal. Then the address was written on the outside. A couple of words would be sufficient, because the messenger to whom the letter was entrusted would know where and to whom it should be delivered. In all the ancient copies there is no elaborate heading such as "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Romans", but merely "To Romans". And so, with a sigh of thankfulness and an inward prayer, the work was finished.

It seems natural to ask how far Paul's method of work influenced the style and contents of the Epistles. Did he dictate from a draft he had written before-

hand ? Or had he made notes of what he wished to say ? Or did he, in the modern phrase, " just make up his letters as he went along " ? To some extent, any answers to such questions must be tentative. Yet there are a few points which seem beyond doubt. The first is that we find passages in these letters which neither Paul nor any other human being could have extemporized on the spur of the moment. The great panegyric of love which forms 1 Cor. xiii is an obvious example, and there are others. We may also feel certain that Paul would not begin to dictate one of his longer epistles until he had thought out carefully the main points which he wished to bring before the church he was addressing. Yet, apart from special passages prepared in detail beforehand, we may feel that generally, while he knew what he was going to say, he did not know how he was going to say it. He trusted to the inspiration of the moment for his choice of words and the sequence of his thoughts. As a result, the quality of his writing, judged from this standpoint, varies enormously. At times the construction of his sentences and the precision with which one thought is followed logically by the next are admirable. At other times he goes astray. Too many ideas crowd upon him. He leaves a subject partly developed to turn down some attractive byway, to deal incidentally with a subordinate idea that suddenly has occurred to him, and then never returns to his main road. Often he is led to digress by recollecting some argument which might be urged against the statement he has just made. At his great moments, he will discuss a profound theological theme not only with glorious eloquence but with a lucidity of thought and coherence

of phrasing that are marvellous. There are also occasional moments when he rambles. The first chapter of the Ephesian letter offers an example. After the introductory greeting, the whole of the first chapter consists only of two gigantic sentences, in which clause follows clause almost, as it seems, at random. Many of them are beautiful in themselves, but they do not hang together. We are very conscious that the writer is dictating. As thought after thought occurs to him, the amanuensis takes it down, and the huge sentence gets yet another addition. In our English Bible this first chapter contains, after the greeting, some five hundred words, and there is only one full stop in the middle of them.

To notice such flaws is in no way to disparage the superb quality of the Epistles as a whole. It is merely to remember that Paul was a human being, always an overworked and often an ailing human being, who could not be unfailingly at his best. It is to be remembered also that his main work was preaching, and that these letters were intended chiefly to supplement or to prepare the way for his sermons. When writing on doctrinal subjects, probably he repeated, as any preacher would, phrases and illustrations which he had utilized, perhaps earlier on the same day, in a spoken discourse. Of Romans chapters ix-xi Professor C. H. Dodd suggests, in his valuable commentary on this Epistle, "it is probable that they represent a sermon or tract on the subject of the Rejection of Israel which Paul had composed earlier, and may have used frequently when he had to discuss that subject".

In the previous chapter reference was made to the fact that, some twenty-five years after Paul's

martyrdom, the collection of his letters that we now possess was probably made at Ephesus, and that Onesimus, the fugitive slave on whose behalf Philemon was written, has been suggested as its editor. The theory that the Philemon letter was really a request for the return of Onesimus to Rome in order that he might serve the church seems well founded. Attempts have been made to identify him with the Onesimus who, according to Irenaeus, was bishop of Ephesus about A.D. 107. Dr. John Knox, of the University of Chicago, accepts this view, and argues that it was Onesimus who collected and edited the letters of Paul. (The student will find a summary of Dr. Knox's arguments in the *Journal of Theological Studies*, October 1936. Dr. E. A. Goodspeed, in his *Introduction to the New Testament*, 1937, restates and supports the view of Dr. Knox, who is among his colleagues at Chicago University.) The suggestion deserves mention, because it is both attractive and, up to a point, plausible. It provides a simple answer to a question which perplexed many early commentators: Why was Philemon, a wholly private letter about a slave, included in the collection of Paul's letters to churches and church officials? To Onesimus, if he were in truth the editor, it would seem to have extreme interest and value, because it had proved to be the turning-point in his life. Yet, as Dr. Goodspeed frankly admits, the conjecture must remain a conjecture. The name Onesimus was so common at the time that the identity of the Onesimus of the letter with the Onesimus who was bishop of Ephesus cannot be proved.

A question of more practical importance is in what degree did the editor, whether Onesimus or

another, alter and rearrange the text of the Pauline letters before circulating them in a collected form among the churches? The welcome answer is that his good sense and his reverence for Paul restrained him from enterprise of this kind. There is every reason to believe that nine of the ten principal letters have come to us exactly as Paul wrote them. They bear no signs of revision. A well-intentioned but unwise editor would have toned down those over-emphatic phrases which Paul, in the heat of the moment, occasionally used. He would have attempted to straighten out some of the more tangled passages. He would have deleted, as having lost their interest, personal greetings to people who had long since died. Fortunately, no such changes were made. What, apparently, the editor did was that having—in addition to 1 Corinthians—one short complete letter and parts of two others to the Corinthian church in his possession, he pieced them together and issued the result as 2 Corinthians. He may have linked a short separate letter of commendation with the Roman letter. If, again, as the majority of—though not all—modern scholars believe, the Pastoral Epistles are late compositions, written round a few genuine fragments of Paul's making, this work may well have been done at Ephesus by the "general editor" of the Pauline Epistles. This is a matter of conjecture. Far more important is the certainty, so far as certainty is possible, that we have nine of Paul's letters exactly as they left his hands. Even in 2 Corinthians not a word of extraneous matter is introduced. When part of one letter follows another very different in tone—as happens, apparently, at the end of chapter ix—nothing has

been inserted to smooth down, as it were, the abruptness of this transition. If we have not all that Paul wrote in this Corinthian correspondence, at least we have no inserted words written by anyone else.

At this stage we can pass to consider each of the letters in turn. Here, of course, this will have to be done briefly. There are few more rewarding or exhilarating tasks than to work slowly through one of the more difficult Epistles in detail, aided by several first-rate commentaries. The leisure it needs, however, is not within the command of everyone. Even if it is, detailed study of a single book is helped by a preliminary survey of all the Epistles, and a general knowledge of them and their writer. One of the chief aims of this book is to assist the Bible-reader who, deterred by their seeming obscurity, has been inclined to neglect Paul's Epistles as a whole, and to limit himself to a few favourite passages in them.

This will be the method of dealing with each Epistle in the following pages : first, we will try to answer the questions that naturally arise when we handle an ancient letter : What kind of people were they to whom this letter is addressed ? Why and when did Paul write it ? What was its main idea ? Next, there shall be a paraphrase of the letter in modern English ; not, of course, a complete translation, but a summary of it ; enough, it is hoped, to enable the reader to follow its sequence of thought and the drift of its argument when he reads the Epistle for himself. Finally, a few notes will be appended, dealing with points of special interest or difficulty.

In the following pages the Epistles are arranged according to the chronological order which is now

generally accepted as correct. A few authorities suppose Galatians to be earlier than Thessalonians, but this small variation is unimportant. In the arrangement of the Bible no attempt was made to place the Pauline letters according to their dates ; with these—as, yet more unfortunately, with the prophetic books—the method adopted was simply to place all the longer before any of the shorter. One among many advantages of reading these letters in their right sequence is that it enables us to trace the development of Paul's mind and character. To the end, he continued to grow. He was already a very great man when he wrote the Thessalonian and Galatian letters, yet when, some ten years later, he wrote to the Philippian church, he had gained further wisdom, deeper insight and more persuasive charm.

PART II

THE LETTERS IN DETAIL

I. THE MISSIONARY LETTERS

1 and 2 Thessalonians
Galatians
1 Corinthians
2 Corinthians
Romans

II. THE CAPTIVITY LETTERS

Ephesians
Colossians
Philemon
Philippians

I. THE MISSIONARY LETTERS

1 AND 2 THESSALONIANS

I THESSALONIANS

IT is interesting to remember that these two letters are, almost certainly, the earliest Christian writings we possess. The interval of time between them must have been short. Both have the same characteristics and deal with the same topics, so that they may conveniently be studied together.

Their early date is reflected by their style. It is almost casual, far less orotund than the manner Paul developed afterwards. In the other letters to churches the first sentence usually reminds its readers that the contents come with the authority of "Paul the apostle". In both the Thessalonian letters it is simply "Paul" who greets his friends. They are not of the kind over which he spent much thought beforehand. These two dictated letters are real "talks", with no prepared plan in them beyond that of dealing with news lately received from Thessalonica and giving some deserved praise and some needed warnings. This lack of arrangement and the frequent repetitions add in some degree to the intimacy and charm of these letters, though making them difficult to summarize. On the other hand, there is no profound theology in them, no subtle rabbinic arguments, and only one cryptic allusion. To understand 1 and 2 Thessalonians, therefore,

the reader only needs to know the circumstances in which they were written and the main points which Paul wished to drive home.

There is one caution he should keep in mind, when reading for himself both these and the other Epistles—not to be misled by Paul's oddly indiscriminate use of the singular and plural pronouns. Sometimes, obviously enough, "we" means the whole Christian community. At other times it means "I and the companions who are with me here as I write". He had Timothy and Silvanus (who is called "Silas" in Acts) with him when he wrote the Thessalonian letters; possibly enough, one of them acted as his amanuensis. And therefore, with characteristic courtesy, he associates them with himself in the greetings and good wishes he sends. Quite often, however, the "we" means only "I, Paul". This would not be misleading if he always used the plural pronoun, but what he does is to use either "I" or "we" quite indifferently when referring to himself alone. Occasionally there is "I" in one sentence and "we" in the next, yet in both the meaning is "I, Paul". One curious example occurs at the beginning of the third chapter in the first Epistle. Paul explains that, much as he dreaded solitude, he preferred to put up with it for a time rather than remain in uncertainty about what was happening in Thessalonica. So he despatched his only companion at the moment, Timothy, to make enquiries. But his mode of writing this is to say: "Wherefore when *we* could no longer forbear, *we* thought it good to be left at Athens alone and sent Timothy", etc. Then, three verses later, he writes: "For this cause, when *I* could no longer forbear, *I*

sent to know your faith " This is a small point, yet some passages will seem needlessly puzzling if this mannerism is forgotten.

When Paul first brought Christianity from Asia, the continent of its origin, to Europe, Thessalonica was the second place in which he stayed, preached and formed a church. Thessalonica was—and is—a flourishing seaport town. (Thessaloniki is the modern Greek form of its name ; during the Turkish occupation it was called Salonica, and this form is still in common use.) According to the summary given in Acts of Paul's work in Thessalonica, he succeeded in converting a " multitude " of the Greek inhabitants. This was resented by the Jews, of whom there was a large settlement in Thessalonica, as in every important town. They attacked Paul and his companions, and brought their host, Jason, before the magistrates on the charge of harbouring these troublesome strangers. Men who preached " the kingdom of God " could easily be accused of acting " contrary to the decrees of Caesar ". Either in obedience to an order of the court or because his brethren thought his life in danger, Paul had to leave Thessalonica and move on to Beroea, forty miles away. Here also he began a highly successful mission, but it was interrupted by the arrival of the Jewish leaders who had attacked him in Thessalonica. In any Eastern city the dregs of the population were always ready to be hired, for a very modest sum, to demonstrate violently. It was a mob of this kind which had shouted " Crucify ! " in the forecourt of the Pretorium in Jerusalem ; and it was a mob of this kind which cut short Paul's work at Thessalonica, Beroea and elsewhere.

As a measure of precaution, his fellow-Christians insisted on his removal to Athens. He himself, he relates, wished greatly to go back to Thessalonica. His months there had gained him not only a multitude of converts but a host of personal friends. He had come to know the members of its church not only as a congregation but individually; "you remember", he wrote afterwards, "how I was able to behave to each of you like a father with his children". These Thessalonians had readily listened to the Gospel, and had been grateful and affectionate. He had formed them into a church, probably with Jason's house as its headquarters, and had appointed church officers. In fact, his work was prospering greatly when the malign opposition of the Jews compelled him to leave. What, Paul wondered, was happening now? The Jewish attack would not cease with his departure; no doubt it was now being directed against all the Christians in Thessalonica. And the friends and relations of those he had converted from paganism would now be trying to undo his work. Were they succeeding? Were his Thessalonian friends enduring the strain of unpopularity and persecution or giving way?

As time went on and no news came, Paul's anxiety on these points increased. At last he resolved that, at whatever cost, he must end the suspense. He dreaded the thought of being left alone in Athens, yet solitude would be more tolerable than these haunting fears about Thessalonica. He would send Timothy to find out what was happening there and to bring him definite news.

By the time that Timothy returned, Paul had left Athens, and it was at Corinth that Timothy found

him and made his welcome report. The Thessalonian Christians were standing fast. In fact, the report of their courage had spread to other parts of Greece, causing people there first to enquire about and then to accept this new faith which produced such remarkable results. Paul feels he must send a letter at once to let the Thessalonians know what immense relief and happiness this news has given him. Then, as he is about to begin the letter, he turns to Timothy. Has he any suggestions to make? When he was at Thessalonica, did the people there ask any special questions, or was there any special advice which they seemed to need? If so, these points should be dealt with in the letter. What Paul wrote clearly reveals Timothy's reply. There were three matters, he suggested, on which Paul might well think it worth while to touch. First, he ought to know that his personal reputation was being traduced by his enemies. They were asserting that he made popularity his aim, and that he turned popularity to practical account by living comfortably at the expense of his converts. Secondly, there was a rather curious question which seemed to trouble the Thessalonians considerably. Paul had encouraged them to believe—a belief which he himself was to modify in later years—that the return of Christ, a Day of Judgment, and the end of the present order in this world were to be expected in the near future. Those who accepted him as Lord would have the rapture of beholding his return in glory. Yes, said the Thessalonians, but what about those of us who die first? We understand that when the Lord has descended they will be raised from the dead, but will they miss the glorious spectacle of his descent? Paul made a

note that he would include in his letter an answer to this question. Thirdly, there were details of conduct, Timothy believed, about which warnings from their revered teacher would be useful. Some members of the Thessalonian church were impatient of control, lacking the sense of discipline. All were exposed to the moral dangers of life in a pagan city, and the more so because, up to the time of their conversion, its debased standard had been their own.

Here, then, were Paul's four subjects to be brought into his letter : (1) congratulations to the Thessalonians on their courage and devotion ; (2) a reply to the charges against himself which they had heard ; (3) an answer to their question about the Second Coming ; (4) affectionate suggestions and warnings for daily life. The reader will find that everything said in this letter is linked with one of these four subjects, and, with these in his mind, he will need little further explanation. But he must not expect to find each theme discussed and finished before Paul proceeds to the next. This was not his method when writing to the Thessalonians. In these two letters he is not a founder of a church giving a series of carefully arranged commands on successive points ; he is a friend talking casually and affectionately to his friends. He will say things quite informally as they occur to him. 1 Thessalonians has been justly described by Professor Goodspeed as " a great document of Christian friendship ", and none but a lamentably prejudiced reader will not feel at its close how great a treasure Paul's friendship must have been.

The following is a brief summary of 1 Thes-

salonians. The bracketed numerals indicate the chapter divisions of the Bible translation.

(1) Paul, Silvanus and Timothy greet the members of the Thessalonian church, wishing them God's grace and peace.

I can always remember you with thanksgiving in my prayers, for I know what fine Christian qualities you have shown. My mission among you was successful indeed, through the power of the Spirit. You imitated me in turning to the Lord, and you in turn became a pattern church, with an influence felt not only in your own province of Macedonia but here in Achaia as well. In fact, there is no longer need to ask questions about you; of their own accord people everywhere speak of the way in which you responded to my mission to you, and report how completely you have passed from your former idol-worship to the service of the true and living God.

(2) As for those malicious falsehoods about me that have been circulated among you by my enemies, your own experience, my brothers, will enable you to contradict them. You know how before coming to you I had been ill-treated and insulted at Philippi. Yet this did not deter me from bringing the Gospel to you, in spite of great opposition. How absurd, then, to allege that I am a popularity-hunter! And you will recall my individual pastoral work among you, how my relations with each of you were like those of a father with his children. I sought no worldly honour or reward. You know that I worked night and day, at my trade as well as at my preaching, so that no-one should be put to the expense of maintaining me.

You understood this, and realized that I was bringing you no mere human message, but the true word of God. I am the more thankful, because I know how you also are enduring persecution—being attacked by your fellow-Macedonians, just as the Judaean churches have been by

the Jews—Jews such as killed our Lord and now try to prevent me from preaching to the Gentiles. Be sure that God's wrath is beginning to overtake them !

I wanted immensely to come and see you, for, though out of my sight, not for a moment were you out of my mind. (3) At last, when the suspense became intolerable, as I could not come myself, I sent Timothy, and the excellent news of you he brought back filled me with thankfulness and courage ; it means just everything to me that you should be standing firm in the Lord. So now I can renew my thanksgivings to God for you, and renew also my prayers that I may be given an opportunity of seeing you, and that you may make continual progress in all that is good, right up to the day of our Lord's return.

(4) I implore you to remember the practical rules about conduct which I gave when I was with you, because, whatever progress you have made, I want you to improve yet more and more ! Beware of sexual vice ; you will recollect my warnings about this. Then about loving and helping your fellow-Christians. Hardly necessary, it may seem, to write about this, for I know that the love you have shown has already extended far beyond your own town. Yet in this too there is always room for improvement. Do your daily work honestly, so that you may be self-supporting, and may win the respect of those who are outside the Church.

Next let me answer your question about those of our number who die. No need of pagan lamentation ! We who are still living when our Lord returns will not have any unfair advantage over them, as you seem to fear. They will rise first ; we shall join them in the clouds ; all of us will be together with our Lord for ever. Let this assurance bring you comfort.

(5) About the point in time when our Lord will return, I need not write to you, for you already know all that can be known—that it will be sudden, like the attack of a thief

at night-time on the unprepared. But we must not be surprised by the sudden daybreak, like the thief, for we are all children of light, not of darkness. We must be found wakeful, not sleeping, and attired in our armour, as God's soldiers; for breastplate, we have faith and love, and for helmet, the hope of salvation. Yes, that hope is ours, through Christ who died that, whether waking in life or sleeping in death, we should still live in him. So take comfort and strengthen one another.

Now for some final words of advice. You must respect and love your church officers, you must not quarrel among yourselves. Help all who need help in various ways, never give up your prayers and do not forget thanksgiving. Do not despise preaching, but test what is said and cling to what is good. Keep away from anything that even seems evil. And may God preserve you wholly to the day of Christ's return; He who has called you to his service will protect you always. Pray for me. Salute the brethren with the kiss of peace, and take care that this letter is read aloud when they are all assembled.

[*In Paul's own handwriting*] "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you."

This letter is so simple and straightforward that the general reader, who will not wish to concern himself with small technical details, scarcely needs any further notes on it. What prevented Paul from returning to Thessalonica when he greatly wished to do this? He says that "Satan stopped him"—which may mean that he was suffering from the ailment—termed by him his "thorn in the flesh"—which often afflicted him. This would explain the evident depression from which he suffered at Athens—where he preached with far less than his usual success. Illness would also intensify his feeling of worry about what might be happening in Thessa-

lonica, and would account for his dread of solitude when Timothy had left him. But other explanations have been offered—for instance, that Jason before being released by the Thessalonian magistrates had to give an undertaking not only that Paul would at once leave their city but that he would never enter it again.

It is interesting to notice that twice in this letter Paul brings together the three great Christian virtues. In i, 3 he speaks of "your work of *faith*, and labour of *love*, and patience of *hope*". In v, 8 the Christian armour comprises "the breastplate of *faith* and *love*, and for an helmet, the *hope* of salvation."

2 THESSALONIANS

In his first letter Paul explained that no-one could name the day of the Lord's expected return ; all that could safely be said was that it would come suddenly. But before long news reached him from Thessalonica that this part of his letter had been misunderstood. Many readers had taken it to mean that the return of Christ in glory would be almost immediate. This was, in its way, a natural mistake. If anyone asks when a thing will happen, and the reply is "suddenly, and at any time", it seems a reasonable inference that the speaker expects it in the near rather than in the remote future. Indeed, Paul's own view seems to have been modified between the writing of his first and second letters. In the second he indicates that the Second Coming cannot be expected until certain preliminary events, described in cryptic and difficult language, have taken place.

In themselves, mistaken beliefs about the imminence of Christ's return did not matter very much.

But the mistaken ideas had led to practical results that did matter, and were altogether lamentable. Many Thessalonian Christians worked themselves up into a state of tense emotional excitement. Some, possibly encouraged by a document which falsely claimed to come from Paul, maintained that "the Day of the Lord is already here". (The Authorized Version's "is already past" is a translator's blunder.) And the least worthy members of the Thessalonian church took the line that, as the Day of the Lord had either come or was just about to come, they could not be expected to continue their normal occupations. Accordingly, they refused to do any more work, claiming that it must be the duty of their fellow-Christians to maintain them.

It was to deal with this situation that Paul wrote 2 Thessalonians. His language about the Day of the Lord is mysterious, but his practical directions are admirably explicit. His friends must not allow themselves to be influenced by false reports or distracted from present duties by speculations about the future. As for the man who makes his religion an excuse for loafing, Paul repeats with emphasis a rule he has already laid down: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat".

Apart from these special points, the second letter contains little that had not already been said in the first. Paul repeats, almost in the same words, his praise and thanksgivings for the courage with which the Thessalonians are enduring attack, and his prayers for their continued perseverance and progress. Owing to this similarity, it has occurred to a few modern critics to question the genuineness of 2 Thessalonians. But not one of the early authorities

had the slightest doubt of its authenticity, and it was quoted as the work of Paul about A.D. 185. Perhaps the objections are due to a forgetfulness of human nature which at times seems characteristic of academic criticism. When Paul dictated his first letter, the Thessalonians were bravely enduring persecution. When he dictated his second, some months later, they were still resisting similar attacks with similar courage. Paul did not keep copies of his correspondence ; when about to write his second letter he could not consult a file in order to avoid repeating himself. Nor, we may think, would he have done this if he could. Having much the same things to say to people in unchanged circumstances, he was content to say them in much the same words. Even in the course of a single letter he never shrinks from repeating himself when this may help him to drive home his point.

The "greeting" from Paul, Silvanus and Timothy is virtually identical in 1 and 2 Thessalonians. After the greeting, 2 Thessalonians may be summarized briefly as follows :

(1) I have every reason to feel thankful about you, my brothers, because your faith grows stronger and the goodwill among you increases. In fact, I (as the founder of your church) am proud of you, and boast to other churches of your faith and patience in a time of persecution. In the last day God will judge between you and your enemies, giving you rest, and driving eternally from his presence those who refuse to hear the Gospel of Jesus Christ. To my thanksgivings I add my prayers for you, that God may make you worthy of your Christian calling, so that, by his grace, Jesus Christ may be glorified in the eyes of the world by you, and you may be glorified in him.

(2) Now about that last day and the Second Coming. I implore you not to get excited and worried by reports—whether spread by word of mouth or contained in letters purporting to come from me—that the Day of the Lord is already here. Before it can come, the embodiment of wickedness, claiming to be divine, the Antichrist, must appear. (You remember how I warned you about this when I was with you in Thessalonica?) At present there is a restraining force which prevents his appearing; when this is removed, the Antichrist will be revealed. But he will be destroyed when our Lord returns in glory. Antichrist will show many false signs and wonders, deceiving those who have not received the truth because they delighted in wickedness.

I am thankful that it is otherwise with you; God has chosen you, and you welcomed the Gospel truth, so that glory may be yours when the Lord returns. So stand fast, and be loyal to the teaching I have given you, whether orally or in my letters. May God encourage and strengthen you!

(3) I ask you to pray, my brothers, for me and my work, so that other people may hear the Gospel, as you have, and pray that I may be delivered from my enemies. I am sure you will do what I tell you; sure, too, that the Lord will help and protect you.

You must have nothing to do with members of your church who disregard the rule about work which I gave you—and followed myself; you remember how I would take no free meals; instead, I worked night and day, so as not to be an expense to anyone—though I had a full right to such support, had I chosen to take it. I told you plainly what the rule was: “he who will not work shall not eat”. By the authority Christ has given me, I order these people to work for their living. If, after this letter has been read, anyone still disobeys, you should refuse to associate with him—yet not in a way to make him your enemy, but in a

way to make him feel ashamed of himself, and admonish him in brotherly fashion. May the Lord of peace grant you peace. So I end—as, to show they are authentic, I end all my letters—with a sentence in my own writing : “ The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all ”.

In the few notes which follow the summaries of the Epistles the numerals used will denote chapter and verse. Any words quoted will be taken from the Authorized Version, as it is this which the great majority of Bible-readers use.

NOTES

i, 2. “ The charity toward each other aboundeth.” Paul is thankfully recognizing the improvement that has taken place since he wrote his earlier letter.

iii, 1-12. This is a most enigmatic passage. It is written in the idiom of that “ apocalyptic ” literature which, beginning when prophecy ceased, had a great influence among the Jews over a long period. Our Bible contains an early example in the Book of Daniel and the latest (and incomparably the finest) in the Apocalypse of St. John. Our Lord was familiar with apocalyptic writings, and used their imagery for his own purpose. Most of it, written in days of persecution, was designedly obscure. It aimed at giving its message in language which could be interpreted by the readers for whom it was intended, but would baffle any spies or enemies into whose hands it fell. Paul hardly makes any use of its idiom except in this passage.

Up to a point, his meaning is clear. The Thessalonians must not think that the Day of the Lord is

already here or immediately coming. Before the Lord's return, the "Man of Sin", Antichrist, must appear. But this in turn cannot happen until some restraining force, which now holds him back, is removed. So far, there is little difficulty. But when we ask who or what is the Man of Sin and who or what is the restraining power, no confident reply is possible. According to one theory, Antichrist is hostile Judaism and the power temporarily holding it in check the Roman government. Another theory suggests that the Roman government is—or, to be more precise, will become—the Antichrist. Of course any writer living within the Roman Empire who wished either to denounce that Empire or to predict its approaching decay would be particularly careful to do so by veiled allusion rather than by open statement, in case his writings should come into the hands of some informer or government official.

The inner meaning of Paul's designedly cryptic phrases has been discussed almost interminably by scholars. But the general reader, if he is wise, will be content to note the general significance of the passage—its correction of the Thessalonians' mistaken idea that the Day of the Lord was to come immediately—and pass on. The simple fact is that while the Thessalonians (aided by Paul's oral teaching) probably possessed the key to the riddle, we do not. If we had, it would increase the historical interest of the passage, but this would still represent an obsolete type of thought and be without practical importance. There are better ways of employing time than to spend it in devising or studying conjectural interpretations, none of which can be more than conjectural, and none of which have any real

bearing upon the problems of Christian thought and conduct.

iii, 17. "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle." The two Thessalonian letters are, almost certainly, the earliest writings of Paul that have survived. But his phrase, "in every epistle", seems to indicate that he must have written a good many other and still earlier letters which are lost.

In the introduction to these Thessalonian letters it was mentioned that both were written at Corinth. Therefore the reader may be perplexed when he observes a note beneath each Epistle in the Authorized Version stating that it "was written from Athens". These notes are rightly omitted in the Revised Version. They are late, they are without authority, and they are due to a sheer blunder. Their writer had noticed that Timothy left Paul at Athens and jumped to the mistaken conclusion that he must have rejoined the apostle at the same place. In fact, Paul had moved on during Timothy's visit to Thessalonica. He was at Corinth when Timothy came back to him, and it was at Corinth, beyond question, that Paul wrote both his letters to the Thessalonian church.

GALATIANS

TWO letters from the same writer could hardly be more different than are 1 Thessalonians and Galatians. The former, as we have seen, is the easy and almost casual talk of a friend with friends, to let them know what happiness the good news of them has given him, to assure them how constantly they are in his thoughts and prayers, and to offer some cautions and counsels which may be useful to them. Paul was in a happy and tranquil mood when he dictated 1 Thessalonians. But his mood was far from happy and far from tranquil when he summoned his secretary to take down a letter to the Galatians. He was hurt, surprised and angry. In both instances it was news he had just received which caused him to write. But while the news from Thessalonica was better than he had hoped for, the news from Galatia was worse than he had ever feared. It threatened to undo his work, work that had promised excellent results, in places which together formed an important centre. And it threatened the whole future of Christianity as Paul understood it. All he stood and hoped for was being endangered by the unexpected relapse of his Galatian converts, influenced by his enemies, into a creed which seemed to him fundamentally wrong, the very negation of Christ's Gospel.

At once, therefore, he decided to act. It was no

time for compliments or gentle words. Only the most vigorous and outspoken remonstrance could restore the situation and recover the lost ground. His deep affection for his Galatian Christians remained, in spite of their errors and follies. But at this juncture it would be a failure of love to refrain from castigating them as they deserved. His letter must tell them quite plainly what he thought of their conduct, what pain and dismay the report of it had caused him. It must refute the personal charges against him which his enemies had spread. It must re-state the true Gospel, the doctrine which the Galatians had readily accepted when he was with them. Before it ended, it must insist, as every letter from Paul insisted, on right conduct as the necessary consequence of right belief. And, coming from his heart, it must show that even now his love for these pitifully mistaken people was unaltered, that he regarded them still as his brethren, that he was confident still of their return to better ways.

With such thoughts surging in his heart and struggling to find utterance, Paul began his letter. Every other Epistle, even when later it has to find grave fault with the people to whom it is addressed, begins by commemorating gratefully all that could be said in their praise. The fine courtesy of Paul impelled him to make his first words of this kind. But, for once, he could not do it. Any praise of these Galatians, any expressions of thankfulness about them, would be a pretence; any elaborated greeting would be a waste of time. At once he plunges into his subject, and has begun to argue with his opponents in his first half-dozen words.

We have only to understand the cause and char-

acter of this letter to feel, after nineteen centuries, the passionate, the white-hot emotion with which it is charged. With concentrated energy Paul rebukes and pleads, commands and persuades. When he fancies himself to be facing an opponent, he turns upon him with one of those involved rabbinic arguments which, artificial and obscure as they seem to us, would be more likely than any other to attract and convince the people whom Paul had in mind. They make the central part of the Galatian letter difficult for the general reader. Here—as with some similar passages in other Epistles—he will be wise to content himself with grasping the general drift of the argument, and to refrain from trying to follow it exactly in every detail.

But it is essential to realize the circumstances which drew this remarkable and impassioned letter from Paul. In the course of a missionary journey he had visited and established Christian churches in the Pisidian Antioch (which must be so named to distinguish it from Antioch in Syria), Iconium, Lystra and Derbe—places in different districts, but all within the Roman province of Galatia. (The theory that this letter was addressed to people in the northern *district* called Galatia is now generally abandoned. It was a sparsely-populated area, and there is no record that it was ever visited by Paul.) Owing to illness, his stay in the province of Galatia was longer than he had intended it to be. Yet he was able to preach; he made large numbers of converts who quickly became his devoted friends. When at length he left the neighbourhood, it seemed certain that the churches he had founded in it would be loyal to his teaching. But his departure was soon followed

by the arrival of "Judaizers", intent on undoing his work. The character and crucial importance of the points at issue between them and Paul were described at some length in the first chapter of this book. The main point urged by the Judaizers, it will be remembered, was that while Christianity might supplement Judaism, it could not replace it. The Christian, whether he were Jew or Gentile before his conversion, was still bound to conform with the Jewish Law and Tradition. Not otherwise could he hope to have any covenant relationship with God. As much as ever, admission to the Jewish church by the rite of circumcision was essential for every Gentile convert who became a Christian. Jewish converts to Christianity must continue to be punctilious in observing every ordinance and ceremony of the Jewish code.

Many of these Judaizers were, from their own point of view, thorough and convinced Christians, wishing merely to combine the old beliefs with the new. The Christian church in Jerusalem—where, naturally, Judaism was at its strongest—had been inclined, under the leadership of James, to support this attitude. Many other Judaizers, Paul suggests, were not at heart Christians at all. They went through the form of being baptized in order that, as nominal members of the Christian church, they might the more easily attack it from within. One course they had taken in Galatia was a clever if unscrupulous attempt to discredit Paul. He had no authority to teach, they suggested. He was not one of the real apostles who had been appointed to their work by Christ himself. From them Paul had picked up such second-hand scraps of knowledge as he possessed, and he was clearly their inferior. Also he

was a "man-pleaser", one who suited his views to his audience, who upheld the Law when addressing Jews but belittled it when trying to convert Gentiles. As for the teaching he had given to the Galatians, it was subversive of all true religion. The Galatians must pay no further heed to it. Of course they could remain Christians, but their first duty must be to obey the ancient Law.

That people who had shown deep personal affection for Paul and had welcomed his Gospel should allow themselves to be influenced by attacks of this kind may seem strange to us, as certainly it seemed astonishing to Paul. Yet these Judaizers could present their case plausibly enough. "Our creed", they would urge, "is based on the scriptures. It has the usage of centuries behind it. Christ himself declared that he was not come to destroy the Law. Who is this upstart Paul, this self-appointed and self-styled 'apostle', that he should turn you from the ancient way?" Moreover, they were present among the Galatians; Paul was far away. Their campaign achieved considerable success. Many of the Galatians began to enforce circumcision, to comply with the demands of legalism and its elaborate calendar, to observe, in Paul's phrase, "days and months and seasons and years". Probably it was not long before news of what was happening in Galatia reached him, and this news was the cause of his letter.

It falls into three parts, and the later chapter divisions are useful in indicating them. The first two chapters are personal. Obviously, Paul had to begin by refuting the charges brought against him. It would be useless to re-state his teaching until he had vindicated his right to teach and proved his authority

as an apostle. To do this, he writes two chapters of autobiography, describing events which followed his conversion. "So far from being a mere pupil of the twelve," he writes, "I saw practically nothing of them in those first years—and when I did, they welcomed me as an equal, not as a subordinate. They knew that a call to the apostleship had come to me directly from God. At Jerusalem they did not attempt to give me instructions, but fully approved my independent work. At Antioch, so far from being Peter's subordinate, I rebuked him publicly when, in my judgment, he went astray." Then, having cleared the ground by proving his right to teach, in chapters iii and iv Paul proceeds to use this right, reasserting his doctrine of justification by faith as against justification by the Law. Finally, in the last two chapters he applies that doctrine to conduct, showing what the Christian life should be. Thus the first two chapters of this Epistle are personal, the second two doctrinal, the last two practical. Apart from its historical interest, the vigour of its style and the strong light it throws on Paul's character, the reader will feel that its warnings against a merely formal and ceremonial religion, its insistence on the vital connection there should be between creed and conduct, are of permanent value.

Here is a summary of its contents :

(1) I, Paul—no man-made apostle, but called to my office by God himself—and the Christians with me here, greet the churches of Galatia, wishing you the joy and peace which come from the Father and Jesus Christ.

I am astounded at your fickleness in exchanging the Gospel message I gave you for another!—not that this other is really a Gospel at all. There can be but one, that

which you heard from me—and let curses light on anyone, man or even angel, who says otherwise ! Do you dislike this frankness ? Well, I am the slave of Christ, not a popularity-hunter.

The message I delivered to you had no human origin. You know about my early life as a strict Jew and a persecutor of Christians. After my conversion I did not go up to Jerusalem to be instructed by the other apostles ; in fact, I saw no-one, but went away by myself to Arabia and afterwards returned to Damascus. Three years later I spent a fortnight with Peter in Jerusalem ; James was the only other apostle whom I saw. Next I went away into Syria-Cilicia. I was unknown by sight to the Judæan churches, but when they heard of my preaching, they recognized that my authority to do this came from God.

(2) Years later I went to Jerusalem again, accompanied by Barnabas and Titus. I told the leaders there in private conference about the character of my message when preaching to Gentiles, to satisfy myself that it was sound. Even if Titus, a Greek, was circumcised, this was not under compulsion, and as for those spurious Christians who wanted to reimpose on us all the slavery of the Law, I refused to yield for one moment to their pressure, so important was it to preserve Christian liberty for you Gentiles. As for the supposed leaders of the church—whether they were really important or not is no concern of mine—they had nothing to teach me. On the contrary, recognizing that my work was to be among the Gentiles, just as Peter's was among the Jews, and that both of us equally were commissioned by God, they welcomed me as their equal and fellow-worker. The only request they made of me was that I should raise funds for the poor of Jerusalem, which I was most ready to do.

Later on, at the Syrian Antioch, I opposed Peter publicly. He was clearly in the wrong. He had taken his meals with Gentile Christians until rigorists from Jerusalem objected,

then he did this no longer—and his example was followed by other Jews, including even Barnabas. “Though you are a Jew yourself”, I said openly to Peter, “you disregarded the Jewish Law, yet you try to make this Law binding upon the Gentiles !” Even as Jews we know that the Law can justify no-one ; it is faith in Christ which gives life, and my life is mystically united to his. He loved and gave himself for me, but his Passion would have been needless if we could have become righteous in God’s sight simply by obeying the Law.

(3) Who has bewitched you, you imbecile Galatians—you who had the crucified Christ plainly set forth to you ? I appeal to your experience. You received the Holy Spirit : did the Law give it you ? You bravely faced persecution : was this for the sake of the Law ? You saw miracles : was it the Law which made them possible ?

Now turn—because my opponents profess to rely on the scriptures—to the story of Abraham. It was by his faith that he was justified, and the blessing given him was to include all nations—therefore it is those who believe who are his true children. To rely on obedience to the Law is to be under a curse, a curse which Christ removed from us by bearing it himself. . . . Yes, I anticipate the objections that may be made :

“The promise to Abraham was superseded when the Law was given.”

No, because that promise was a covenant—made not to all Abraham’s children, but to the one line of descent which would end in Christ. And not even a human covenant can be annulled or varied when once it has been formally made.

“If the promise and faith alone were needed, you imply that the Law might as well never have been given—in fact, you call it a ‘curse’.”

No, it had its purpose. It showed men the sinfulness of their hearts and thus their need of a Saviour. But it was

inferior to the promise. The Law came through Moses as a "mediator" between God and man. This means that its continuance depended on its observance by *two* parties to the agreement—God and man. The promise was far stronger, because its continuance depended on God alone, the one and unchangeable.

"You are insisting on the enormous difference between the promise made to Abraham, fulfilled in Christ, and the Law. It seems to follow then, that the Law must be antagonistic to the promise."

Far from it! There was no rivalry, for the two had different purposes. The Law made men realize their sin, and see that there was but one way of escape—the way of faith and acceptance of the promise fulfilled by Christ. The Law took us under its charge, as it were, for a time, until it could lead us to Christ. Now that stage is past. You are no longer like wards under control; baptism has made you the children of God. And in Christ all the old distinctions of race, condition and sex disappear; Gentiles no less than Jews now share the inheritance promised to the descendants of Abraham.

(4) I will try again to make my meaning clear. A child under age cannot own property, has no more status than a slave. That was our position under the Law, but Christ emancipated us, so that we might be able to claim our rights as sons—and the Holy Spirit has given you this sense of sonship, so that instinctively you address God as your Father.

Why, then, turn back to the past? Now that you have found God—or, to speak more accurately, now that God has found you—why revert to virtual paganism, becoming the slaves of a ceremonial calendar? You make me fear that all my work among you was useless. Do something for me, as once I did for you! It was an illness which compelled my stay with you, but did you scorn me, as a sick man? Why, if I had been God's angel you could not

have welcomed me more warmly. There was simply nothing which you would not do for me. Is it because I tell you the truth frankly that you now regard me as an enemy? No doubt these opponents of mine are trying to curry favour with you—but ask yourselves what their motive is! O my children in Christ, for such you are, how I wish I were with you, and able to speak in another tone than this. I am intensely worried about you.

But I must resume my argument. You want to comply with what is written in the Scriptures? Then consider the spiritual meaning of a story from the Scriptures—the story of Abraham's family. Treat it as an allegory, as the rabbis do. It is a story of contrasts: the bondmaid and her son, the freewoman and her son. Birth after the flesh, and birth "through the promise" to Sarah. Ishmael, born a slave. Isaac, born free. Hagar and her son driven out. Sarah and her son abiding in the home. What do these contrasts typify? The old covenant of the Law against the new covenant of the Gospel. Natural birth to bondage against spiritual birth to freedom. Banishment from God against reception as God's sons. Free therefore you are!

(5) Christ has won you this freedom: stand fast in it, and do not relapse into slavery.

I, Paul, say with emphasis that your choice is between the Law—which, if you accept it, you will be bound to keep in every detail—and Christ. If you are united with Christ, then neither circumcision nor uncircumcision matters; what does count, is a faith which shows itself by deeds of love. You were making good progress along the road of truth; who is now blocking your way? Not I, who taught you! ("You are exaggerating the mischief", I think I hear someone say. "After all, these Judaizers are few." Yes, that may be so, but remember the proverb: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump"!) Yet I do believe that you will agree with me, and that those

who lead you astray will be punished. I wish these upholders of circumcision would mutilate themselves !

Free you are, only do not mistake liberty for licence. Fulfil the law of love and let God's Spirit direct your lives. The conflict between this Spirit and the lower part of your nature is unending. If you yield to those baser impulses you know what sins follow, and how different are the fruits of the Spirit—love, good temper, self-control and the rest—there is no Law against these ! As guided by the Spirit, then, let us walk, shunning vanity and jealousy.

(6) Help the wrong-doer to recover his lost ground. Bear one another's burdens. Beware of conceit ; test yourselves ; remember that each has his own responsibility. According as a man sows, he will reap. Try, then, to help all people, but especially your fellow-Christians.

See in what big letters, to emphasize their importance, I am writing the final sentences in my own hand ! These Judaizers do not themselves keep the Law ; it is not your good that they care about, but their own fame ; they want to be able to boast of having won you over. As for me, I am content to glory in the Cross of Christ, so that I am dead to worldly fame. And in his sight it is not circumcision or uncircumcision that matters, but a new character. Peace and mercy be to all who walk according to this principle, for they, Jew or Gentile, are the true people of God ! Let no man dare again to charge me with inconsistency. My scarred body shows of what master I am the slave ! The grace of our Lord be with you, my brothers.

NOTES

ii, 3. The circumcision of Titus. So great was the stress of emotion in which Paul wrote this letter that in some parts of it his sentences are broken and his language incoherent to a degree which, wisely enough, the translators of the English Bible did not

try to reproduce. The opening of chapter ii is one instance. It is quite uncertain which of two things Paul means to say : either (i) Paul, in spite of the pressure put upon him by the Judaizers, refused to have Titus circumcised, or (ii) he did agree to this, but only as a voluntary concession, and not as the result of what the Judaizers urged—and on all essential points he declined to make the slightest surrender to them. The actual wording rather favours this second interpretation, but there can be no certainty about it.

iii and iv contain passages as difficult as any in Paul's writings. This is due partly to his state of mind when he wrote, and partly to his employment of purely rabbinical arguments, arguments which force an artificial meaning into detached sentences and words of the Old Testament. As has already been remarked, he did this in the belief that reasoning of this type would make a special appeal to some of his readers. In itself it is really without value, and the general reader to-day may wisely content himself with grasping the main ideas underlying the arguments—such as the outline given above has attempted to supply—without attempting to grasp their details. For example, of a single sentence (iii, 20 : “ now a mediator is not a mediator of one, but God is one ”) it is recorded that over 300 different interpretations have been given ! That included in the outline here is at least possible, is simple, and seems to make sense. Instead of speculating at length over the meaning of sentences which can never have great value and always will remain more or less obscure, it is wiser to study closely that most moving personal appeal (iii, 8-20) which Paul suddenly interpolates

when in the midst of his argument. Of great and permanent value, again, is the sagacious spiritual counsel of the last two chapters. The words of Paul the ex-rabbi have a certain historical interest for us as we read these letters, but it is on the words of Paul the great Christian that we shall do well to concentrate.

vi, 18. "Brethren." The Authorized (but not the Revised) Version misses a point by transposing this word from the end of the sentence, where it stands in the Greek, to the beginning. Paul has had to reproach and rebuke sternly in this letter, but he wishes its very last word to be a reassurance of his unchanged love for these Galatians; "brothers" is at once his final word of greeting and his strongest ground of appeal.

There is every reason to believe that his appeal succeeded, and it is certain that, under Paul's leadership, the danger which threatened the Christian church, the danger of being reduced again to a mere sect within Judaism, was mastered, and the victory of Christian freedom was won

I CORINTHIANS

THE reader has been reminded that a part only of Paul's correspondence with the Corinthian church survives. One letter at least from him preceded what we know as the "First Epistle", and not only one but several more followed it.

I Corinthians gives us a vivid idea of Paul's work as a church administrator. His correspondence was not altogether unlike that of a modern diocesan bishop. He was pelted with questions; questions about local disputes among church members, about points of public worship, about deep problems of doctrine, about little details of everyday life. Some were urgent and important questions; others of a kind which, as it might seem, the questioners could have answered for themselves without much trouble. Yet Paul, with unfailing patience and courtesy, deals at length with them all. He felt that he had a paternal relationship with these converts to Christianity, who owed their faith to his teaching and their church organisation to his planning.

At this time communication with him was easy. Only a two days' voyage was needed to bring a traveller from Corinth to Ephesus, where Paul was making a long stay. Traffic between the two places was brisk, so that there were frequent opportunities of sending letters. Sometimes, too, Christian visitors from Corinth would call on Paul in Ephesus and put

before him their reports or complaints about what was happening in the Corinthian church. Not long before he began this letter, three such visitors had arrived. Also there were people, employed by an Ephesian lady named Chloe, who had recently visited Corinth, and reported that party spirit was lamentably rife among its Christians. Finally, Paul had lately received a letter from the Corinthian church propounding a long list of questions on a wide variety of subjects.

Here, then, we find the occasion and character of this "First Epistle to the Corinthians". It was written in order to rebuke the growth of party spirit, to deal effectively with wrong practices, amounting even to public scandals, which were injuring the life of the Corinthian church, and to answer in turn each of the many questions contained in the letter Paul had lately received. It follows necessarily that this is a long letter, and also that its various parts are of unequal interest to modern readers. This becomes evident when we notice how remote from our own life are some of the points which Paul had been urged by his correspondents to decide. Two, for example, were concerned with "meat offered to idols". No Christian must take part in the feasts held in pagan temples; about this Paul's judgment was clear and emphatic, upholding the decree already issued for the guidance of Gentile Christians by the Council of Jerusalem. But some of the carcasses that had been "offered to idols" were made over to the local butchers and exposed for sale. What, then, was a Christian woman to do when she went marketing? Was she bound to try to find out if the joint which she thought of buying had come from a heathen

temple? Otherwise might she not unwittingly supply "meat offered to idols" for the family dinner, and was not that sinful? A kindred problem faced the Corinthian Christian who went to dine with a non-Christian friend. Again there was a considerable chance that the meat had been obtained from a temple. To question his host on the subject would be embarrassing. Must he do this, or ought he to refuse the meat course, or might he run the risk and eat?

Such were some of the enquiries with which Paul had to deal in this letter. He had also to give his judgment on various marriage problems, on a peculiarly gross case of incest, on women's attire and their behaviour at public worship. It is interesting, of course, to observe the courage, decision and admirable common sense of his opinions. Otherwise some of these passages in 1 Corinthians cannot be said to have much permanent value. The exact appraisal of the ecstatic speaking known as the "gift of tongues", for instance, vastly concerned the Corinthian Christians of the first century, but has become a meaningless discussion for us to-day. Such facts should be frankly recognized. The general reader often fails to get due profit and pleasure from such a letter as this because he has never been encouraged to distinguish what is of lasting importance in it from what to-day, much as it mattered when Paul wrote, belongs to a vanished past. Thus the "gift of tongues" has ceased, as Paul predicted, but the warnings against party spirit in the church have lost none of their force. Often, too, from some long discussion of a local and temporary matter Paul emerges to state a great principle of lasting validity, and into the midst of a discourse about extinct

"spiritual gifts" he introduces a panegyric of love which ranks amongst the supreme passages of the Bible. This passage, and the great exposition of the resurrection doctrine, are the special glories of this letter.

Something should now be said of the place and the population to which it was sent. Corinth, if it lacked the splendours of its classical age, still ranked among the chief cities of the world in Paul's time. It had been destroyed by the Romans in 146 B.C. and rebuilt by Julius Caesar a century later. It almost faced Ephesus, on the opposite side of the Aegean Sea, and was a notable trade centre. Like other large seaports, it had a shifting and very mixed population; in the neighbourhood of its harbour disreputable people wrangled and swore in many languages. In its earlier period Corinth, with its temple of Aphrodite, had been notorious for its immorality, and this reputation even made an impress on our own language; in the early part of the nineteenth century a young man-about-town of lax morals was commonly termed "a Corinthian". The upper-class Corinthians of Paul's age prided themselves on their culture, and they were not less conceited about it—a weakness on which Paul rallies them—because it was superficial, inclining to debate, rhetoric and epigram rather than to philosophy: Corinth could not vie with Athens, "mother of arts and eloquence". But the Corinthian Christians were rather pleased with their cleverness, always eager to ask questions and to argue, and more easily attracted by the florid Alexandrian eloquence of Apollos than by Paul's less ornate manner of preaching.

Yet Paul had made a large number of converts during his stay of over eighteen months in Corinth. As usual, his own fellow-countrymen were his chief opponents. They were already hostile when he succeeded in winning over to the Christian faith Crispus, the president of their synagogue ; then their anger made them ready to use violence against him at the first opportunity. Such an opportunity, they thought, was supplied by the arrival of a new Roman proconsul, Lucius Junius Gallio. He would welcome the chance of ingratiating himself with the Jewish inhabitants of Corinth, and therefore could be expected to carry out their wishes without too much regard to justice. Any charge would serve ; that of teaching heresy as well as another. Accordingly, they seized Paul and brought him into court. But for once they had mistaken their man. Gallio was not another Pilate. He was righteously indignant with the suggestion that he would be ready to pervert justice for the sake of popularity. Disputes concerning the Jewish religion were, he said, outside his jurisdiction, as the complainants knew perfectly well. " I will be no judge of such matters ", he concluded. He dismissed the case, and ordered the Jews to be driven out of his court. The audience were infected by his indignation. There and then they resolved to pay out these Jews in their own coin. They seized Sosthenes, who as a vehement anti-Christian had been chosen to succeed Crispus, and beat him soundly. Gallio thought it unnecessary to preserve the dignity of a Roman court from this indecorous scene. He declined to interfere, believing that the chastisement of Sosthenes would teach the Jews a salutary lesson and protect Paul against future

molestation. It is a strange irony that the sentence recording his behaviour—"and Gallio cared for none of these things"—has been so misinterpreted through a disregard of its context that the name of an upright man is often used to describe a type of callous indifference. The things for which Gallio refused to care were the things that would have deflected him from his standard of probity. Thanks to him, Paul could remain in Corinth for "yet many days", secure from further attack. Perhaps Sosthenes, president of the synagogue, like his predecessor Crispus, became a member of the Christian church. It is "Paul the apostle and brother Sosthenes" who send their greetings in the first sentence of I Corinthians.

To the letter itself we can now turn. The reader will notice that it is more methodical in its arrangement than are many of the Epistles. Paul begins by dealing with various matters about which reports have been brought to him from Corinth. Then he sets himself to answer, one by one, the questions contained in the Corinthians' letter. There is, it is true, a long and, at first sight, a perplexing digression after chapter viii. This chapter has considered the problem of "things sacrificed to idols", and after the last verse the sequence of thought seems to be dropped until we reach the 23rd verse of chapter x, which follows naturally on verse 13 of chapter viii. Yet the relevance of the interpolated section is not really difficult to see. In the middle of giving his practical instructions to the purchaser and diner-out, Paul breaks off to show that what he has to say on this relatively trivial matter rests on a great principle—namely, that the best way of using rights is often

to refrain from their use, for the sake of others. In chapter ix he takes his own practice as an example. In the first part of chapter x he reinforces the point by the history of the Israelites, showing how many of them abused their freedom, and how dangerous for them was the snare of idolatry. After this excursus, he returns to his immediate subject.

In the outline which follows, passages concerned with matters of local and transient interest are summarized very briefly ; more space is given to those of lasting value. The famous 13th chapter is translated in full, because there are small details of its meaning which are not made clear by either the Authorized or Revised translations.

(1) To the church at Corinth, and to all Christians, Paul the apostle and Sosthenes our brother send their greetings.

I can thank God for the spiritual gifts with which you have been enriched. He who has given them and has called you to his service will strengthen you until the Last Day.

But you must be united—which at present, I hear, you are not, but are divided into parties of “ Paul ”, of “ Apollos ”, of “ Peter ”, of “ Christ ”. Can Christ be made a party leader ? Was it Paul who was crucified, or into whose faith you were baptized ? I am glad (because it makes such absurd talk impossible) I did not myself baptize any of you, except Crispus and Gaius—yes, and as I now remember, the household of Stephanas, but I think that was all. My special work was preaching, not baptizing,—and preaching, not in terms of philosophy, but the gospel of the Cross. The Jews demand miracles to convince them ; the Greeks want philosophy, but I preach the Cross—an offence to the Jews, an absurdity to the Greeks, but to all who have received God’s call, whatever

their race, the source of divine power and wisdom. For what unbelievers think folly is worth more than human wisdom ; what seems to them weakness is stronger than human power. There were few people of great learning, high rank or influence among those whom God called ; he chose those whom the world thinks insignificant, that there should be no pride in human greatness, but " let him that glorieth glory in the Lord ", as Jeremiah wrote.

(2) My own preaching among you was an example of what I have just said. It did not persuade you by its eloquence or philosophic wisdom ; I was troubled in mind and weak in body when I came to you. It was on the power of the Spirit that your faith was based.

There is, though, a divine " wisdom " which, as in the mystery religions, can be disclosed to the initiated and mature, a wisdom unknown to worldly leaders. It is imparted by the Spirit ; the very depths of God's being are revealed by the Spirit. Only a man's spirit shows what a man is ; only the divine Spirit can reveal God, and spiritual truth must be spiritually discerned. We must think as Christ thinks.

(3) I could not disclose this spiritual wisdom to you, for you were not mature, but like children—as your childish divisions into a Paul party and an Apollos party showed. Why, Paul and Apollos are no more than ministers who brought to you what God had given to them. We are God's workmen, but the design is his, and you are the building he planned.

My part was to lay the foundation. Other teachers may build upon it, but let them take care that they do not try to replace the foundation, which is faith in Jesus Christ ! Let them see, too, what material they use for building on my foundation ; the fire of the Judgment Day will test and reveal its quality. The man whose work is burnt will himself with difficulty escape the flame. I said that you are God's building ; indeed, you are his temple, his

church—and to harm his church is to incur the guilt of sacrilege.

You Corinthians plume yourselves on your wisdom. Better become fools in the eyes of men if you can acquire the wisdom of God ! So lay aside your conceit and your disputes. For what do you quarrel ? All things, whether you profess to follow Paul, Apollos or Peter, are already yours, in this world and beyond it ; you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.

(4) Apollos and I are to be regarded simply as God's servants. True, a servant must be faithful, but I care little how you or any other people judge my faithfulness—I do not even try to judge it for myself. The Lord at his coming will reveal all things, and then every man will be rightly valued by God, when all secrets are brought to light.

In speaking as I have done about Apollos and myself I have laid down a principle which applies to all Christian teachers. Why boast about one and belittle another ? And why, in your conceit, brag about your spiritual wisdom as though it were due to yourselves, or as though, without any help from us, you were already reigning in God's Kingdom ? How I wish that you were, and that we were reigning with you ! Contrast your position and self-satisfaction with the plight of us, the apostles ! We know our ignorance and weakness ; we have to suffer every kind of privation ; we are thrown, as it were, on the world's rubbish-heap.

I am not speaking like this merely to make you feel ashamed of yourselves ; I am giving you fatherly advice. For I alone am your spiritual father, to whom you owe your conversion, no matter what number of teachers you may have. So I entreat you to follow my lead. I am sending Timothy to remind you of my teaching. Before long I shall come myself, God willing, and then I shall test, not the high-sounding words, but the spiritual power

of those who give themselves airs ! Decide, then, how you would like me to come—wielding a rod of correction, or in love and gentleness.

Now for another report about you that has reached me. I hear there is a case of incest among you, such as even pagans would not tolerate. I have already decided, as though I were with you, that the wrong-doer must be excommunicated ; his body will be destroyed that his soul may be saved. Evil, like leaven, spreads its influence far. We must keep the Passover Feast of Christ, the Paschal Lamb sacrificed for us, free from the leaven of wickedness, in sincerity and truth. So expel the wrong-doer from your community.

Again, I am told that you resort to litigation, and actually take your cases into the heathen courts ! Cannot you find a Christian among yourselves who is competent to act as arbitrator ? Indeed, why should you have disputes and quarrels at all ? Better be defrauded than go to law. But the fraudulent, and all other sinners against the moral law, are warned that there can be no place for them in God's Kingdom. As for bodily sin, which some of you try to condone, remember that your bodies are not your own—they are God's ; they are, as I have already said, God's temples, and to defile them is to desecrate God's temple. Your bodies, redeemed by Christ, must be controlled to the glory of God.

(7) Now I pass to the questions raised by your letter. First, those about marriage.

i. Should married people cohabit ? Yes, certainly : that is part of the marriage contract—though personally I rate celibacy above the married state. But when celibacy involves moral dangers, marriage is preferable.

ii. What about divorce between Christians ? This is forbidden by our Lord's teaching. If separation does become inevitable, there must be no re-marriage.

iii. Supposing one of the parties to the marriage is a

pagan? Here we have no Divine command, but my judgment is that if the Christian husband or wife has a pagan consort, he or she has no right to break off the marriage—which may be the means of the other's conversion. But this does not apply if it is the pagan partner who insists on a separation.

iv. As a general rule, I suggest that whatever was a man's state when he became a Christian—married or single, circumcised or uncircumcised, slave or freeman—in that state he should be content to remain. Remember, at any moment the Lord may return; we must not allow ourselves to be entangled in this world. The unmarried are less likely than the married to be distracted from their service of the Lord.

v. Widows are free to re-marry, provided that the second husband is a Christian.

(8) Now for your questions about meats that have been used for idol sacrifices. Perhaps we propose to be guided by the wisdom we all believe ourselves to possess! Yet wisdom tends to conceit; it is love which rightly builds character. The man vain of his wisdom has not yet gained the true wisdom, but the man who loves God is the man whom God recognizes. You and I know that, however many so-called "gods" and "lords" there may be, for us there is only one true God, the Father, and one Lord, Jesus Christ. Not all people, however, share this wisdom. Some, having been brought up to idol-worship, still regard the meat as really offered to an idol, and so their conscience suffers when they eat it. In fact, of course, eating this food makes no difference, but take care that your own liberty in this matter does not cause a difficulty to those less well-informed. Else some one, whose conscience forbids him to eat idol-meat, may do so and hurt his conscience because of your example. And so through your knowledge this weaker man—this brother of yours, for whom Christ died—suffers injury. And to sin against a brother is to sin against Christ.

If my eating puts temptation in my brother's way, I will never taste meat again !

(9) (My point is that the Christian should be willing to forgo his undoubted rights for the sake of his brethren. I digress in order to illustrate this by my own example.)

No-one, and you least of all, can doubt that I am an apostle, and as such entitled to all an apostle's rights—to maintenance at the expense of the church, including, if I thought fit, as other apostles do, the additional cost that would be incurred if I married. On what ground could Barnabas and I be thought exceptions to this rule ? Why, a soldier does not serve without pay, the vineyard-owner enjoys its produce, the farmer drinks the milk his herd supplies. And this is no merely human rule ; it is implied by a principle laid down in the scriptures. If, then, I have worked to give you spiritual food, am I not entitled to look to you for bodily food ? Do you not know that the Temple priests live on the Temple offerings ? In the same way, Christ has laid down that preachers of the Gospel should get their living by this work. Such is my undoubted right ; yet I have not used it. And I do not mention it because I want to use it now—I would rather die than do so !—but because, while I am bound to preach the Gospel and give myself no credit for this, I am entitled to credit for doing it gratuitously, without availing myself of my rights.

Again, without any compulsion I have sacrificed my individual views, becoming, as it were, everyman's slave, for the sake of winning as many converts as possible. I became like a Jew to gain Jews ; like a man bound by the Law—which I was not—to gain such men ; like a man outside the Law—my Law is Christ's—to reach those men ; like a weak man to the weak—in short, for the sake of the Gospel and to gain souls, I became all things to all men.

Athletes, too, practise self-denial for the sake of gaining

a prize, though theirs is no more than a fading wreath, ours an eternal crown. Like an athlete, I run straight for the goal, I box not as though I were hitting the air. I discipline my body with self-control, lest, after laying down the conditions of the contest, as a herald does, to others, I myself should be disqualified.

(10) Now take a warning from history. All God's people shared in the deliverance from Egypt, but not all kept his favour ; many of them lapsed into idolatry and immorality, and were punished by death. These things happened as a warning to us who live in the last days. Let the self-satisfied beware of falling. Temptation comes to all, but God will not allow you to be tempted beyond your strength ; he will provide escape or endurance.

Shun the perils of idol-worship. Your own intelligence will confirm the truth of my warning. Our sacrament of the Body and Blood of Christ unites us with him. To take part in the feasts of idol temples is to be linked with the idols ; these sacrifices are offered to demons, not to God. You cannot combine religions ; you cannot partake both of the Lord's feast and the feast of demons. Do we, weak human beings, dare to risk provoking the jealousy of God ?

Perhaps you remind me of my claim that for me, exempt now from the Law, all things are now permitted. True enough ; yet I repeat also that not all things are good for me or help to build up the character of others. And it is the well-being of others that a Christian ought to study.

(So now, after this digression and statement of principles, I return to our immediate subject, and give you the definite rulings for which you have asked me.) Buy your meat in the market without asking questions or being swayed by conscientious scruples. Your food, like everything else in the world, comes ultimately from God. Dine with a pagan if you wish, and eat what he puts before you without question. But if, on the other hand, a Christian fellow-guest tells you that the meat has been offered to an idol

before being sold, eat not, lest you hurt his conscience ;—his, I say, not your own. Of course my freedom should not be sacrificed in deference to another person's scruples, and I ought not to be blamed for eating that for which I can honestly say grace. Yet, while to do all things to God's glory is the supreme rule, you will do this best by not giving needless offence to others, whether they are Jewish or Gentile Christians. This is my own rule and (11) you should imitate me, as I try to imitate Christ.

I pass to other matters, relating to public worship. Sex distinctions must be preserved in church. Men should have their heads uncovered in church ; women should have theirs covered. Long hair is a glory to a woman ; it is unseemly for a man. Your own instinct tells you this, and if anyone wishes to argue further on the subject, it will be sufficient to reply that departures from these rules is sanctioned neither by the apostles nor by church usage.

I cannot commend you when I deal with the next point about your church meetings. I feel bound to credit some at least of the reports describing your doctrinal disputes—and heresies serve to emphasize the value of right belief. As to the love-feast which accompanies your eucharist—I gather that this becomes an unseemly scramble, at which one does not get enough to eat, and another more than enough to drink ! Cannot you take your meals in your own homes ? I told you how solemnly our Lord gave this sacrament : “ This is my Body ” ; “ This cup is the new covenant in my Blood ; do this in remembrance of me ”. To receive is to commemorate the Lord's death, but to receive unworthily is to share the guilt of his death and to draw judgment upon the guilty. This accounts for the fact of much illness and some deaths among you. To end this danger of irreverence, and these scrambles, eat your meals at home. Lesser details I will settle when I come.

(12) Now for your next question. I want to end misunderstandings about spiritual “ gifts ”. In your pagan

days you were led by various influences to worship dumb idols. But, though there is much speaking at your Christian gatherings, you must discriminate. If any ecstatic speaker calls out that "Jesus is accursed", it is not through God's Spirit that he speaks! And no-one can truly say "Jesus is the Lord", unless that Spirit is in him.

For from this same Spirit of God come all the various "spiritual gifts"—the power to speak with wisdom or knowledge, the power to cure or work miracles, the power to preach or to distinguish false from true inspiration, the power of ecstatic utterance or the power of interpreting such utterance—all these come from the one Spirit of God, who bestows different gifts on different men. It is like, to use a metaphor, the human body, in which each part has its distinct function, yet all belong to the same body, which needs them all, and suffers as a whole if any one part is injured. Together you are Christ's Body; individually, each with a separate gift is a part of that Body. Imagine the result if the gifts of all were precisely alike! Certainly aspire to the greater gifts, yet I can put you in the way of what is incomparably best.

(13) Though my language be that of inspired men or angels, if I am without love, I am like echoing bronze or a clanging cymbal. Though I have the gift of preaching, and understand all secret knowledge and all sacred rites, though I have the faith that can remove mountains, if I am without love, I am nothing. Though I give away everything I possess to feed the poor, though I sacrifice my body, if I am without love this profits me nothing. Love is long-suffering and kind. Love is not jealous, boastful or conceited. Love is not ill-mannered, self-seeking or irritable. Love keeps no account-book of injuries; rejoices not over injustice, but over the triumph of truth. Love puts up with faults, is rich in hope, trust and patience. Love remains for ever. As for the gift of preaching, this will become obsolete; as for the gift of

tongues, it will cease ; as for human wisdom, this will become obsolete also. All we know is a little, all we can preach is a little, but incompleteness vanishes when completeness comes ! When I was a child I talked, thought, reasoned like a child ; but I finished with childish ways when I became a man. Now we see no more than broken reflections, as in a bronze mirror ; but then it will be face to face. Now my knowledge is incomplete ; then shall I know fully, even as always I have been fully known. Meanwhile, faith, hope, love, these three, remain—but the greatest of these is love.

(14) Strive for love, then. And desire the best spiritual gifts—especially that of preaching, which I put first. When a man with “the gift of tongues” speaks a mysterious ecstatic language, it may be of profit to himself, but the preacher profits those who hear him. Of what use shall I be to you if on my next visit I speak a language none can understand ? Who can follow a tune, unless the notes are distinct ? If the trumpet merely makes vague noises, who will recognize the battle-signal ? The real test of spiritual gifts is their value to the church. In point of fact, I have the power of ecstatic speaking more than any of you, yet I would rather in church speak five intelligible words than ten thousand which would convey nothing to the listeners.

The marvel of ecstatic speaking impresses unbelievers, but preaching helps those who believe. And indeed much of this ecstatic speaking might cause a stranger to suppose you were mad, whereas preaching might lead him to repentance and worship of God.

To sum up, then. I gather that there is confusion at your church meetings, with everyone trying to speak at once. Do not let more than two or three address you in ecstatic language, and these only if there is someone who can interpret their utterances. Two or three preachers at most also, and these taking their turns. God loves order and peace, not confusion. Women are to be silent in

church. I give you these directions as from our Lord. Account preaching the best of the spiritual gifts, though you need not veto ecstatic speaking. But let everything be done in an orderly fashion.

(15) Now I wish to repeat the resurrection doctrine which I gave you. I told you what I myself had learnt about the resurrection of Christ. He died for our sins, was buried, rose again on the third day. He appeared to Peter, then to the apostles, then to more than five hundred people at once—most of whom are still alive, though some have died—then to James, then to all the apostles, and finally to me, who am not fit to be called an apostle. All I have been able to achieve has been due to the grace of God.

How can some of you deny man's resurrection, believing as you do that Christ rose? Plainly, if Christ were not raised, then our whole religion and faith are vain, and based upon falsehood. If there is no resurrection of the dead, Christ was not raised, your sins are unforgiven, the dead have utterly perished. If our hopes in Christ are limited to this life, we are of all men the most pitiable.

But Christ has risen, and therefore those who now sleep in death will rise! Through a man, Adam, came death; through Christ, true man, will come the resurrection life. At his Return his victory is to be complete; it would be incomplete unless it included the conquest of that last enemy, death. And then the Son will place himself under God who placed all things under the Son, and in that final completeness God will be all to everyone.

Your custom of baptism on behalf of the unbaptized dead becomes meaningless if there is no resurrection. Meaningless also become the perils I face hourly. Why, so to speak, did I struggle at Ephesus like a gladiator with wild beasts, if this life were all? Better, if this were true, to follow the Epicurean counsel and to get out of this brief existence all the pleasure we can. Some of you are misled

by bad companions ; some have no true knowledge of God. So turn to better ways !—I hope to stir your consciences by this frank reproof.

But I think someone will ask me : “ What kind of body will the dead have when they rise ? ” Let me give you an illustration, my foolish friend, by way of answer. Your living crops in your fields are there because you sowed seed that seemed entirely dead. And the mere grain you sowed—perhaps wheat, perhaps some other kind—had no resemblance at all to the blade which came through the soil. Why speak about “ the body ” as though there could be only one kind of body ? Look at the varieties of body God has made even in this world ; observe, again, the differences in the heavenly bodies of the sky. So also is the resurrection body a different body. What is buried is perishable, inglorious, feeble, animal ; what rises from death is imperishable, glorious, strong, spiritual—for the spiritual body is as real as the animal. The first Adam became a human being, the second Adam, Christ, a life-giving Spirit ; the first was from the dust of the earth, the second was from heaven. We have been like the first ; we shall be like the second.

You want to know the Christian “ mysteries ” ; here is one I can disclose. Not all will have died before Christ’s return, but all at the last trump will instantly be transformed ; this perishable body of ours will be changed to one imperishable. Thus will the saying be fulfilled : “ Death has been swallowed up by victory ”. Death derives its sting from sin ; sin gains its power through the Law which makes us conscious of sin. But, thanks be to God, the victory is ours, through Jesus Christ ! So stand fast, my brothers, knowing that, if you are united with him, your efforts cannot be in vain.

(16) Now about the collection I am organizing for the Jerusalem Christians. Follow the course I recommended to the Galatian church. Do not wait until I come, but

give what you can afford Sunday by Sunday. Your delegates shall take your gift to Jerusalem—or shall accompany me, if I decide to go myself.

A little later I hope to pay you a visit of some length. If Timothy comes your way, give him all the help you can. I wanted Apollos to visit you ; he has found this impossible as yet, but hopes to come when circumstances allow.

Be loyal, be resolute ; above all, be loving. Accept people like Stephanas—whose arrival here with Fortunatus and Achaicus was a great comfort to me—as leaders of your church whom you do well to obey ; you and I alike are indebted to them.

The churches of the province of Asia send you their greetings, as do Aquila and Priscilla, with the Christians who meet at their house. All the brothers greet you, and do you greet one another with the ceremonial kiss.

Now I, Paul, add my greeting with my own hand. “ Let him be accursed that loves not the Lord. Remember our watchword : ‘ our Lord comes ’. The Lord’s blessing and my love be with you all.”

NOTES

i, 12. The origin of three of the four “ parties ” in the Corinthian church can easily be imagined. “ Paul is my leader ”, said the spokesman of the first —“ Paul, who brought us Christianity and founded our church.” “ I prefer to follow Peter ”, said the second : “ Peter was foremost among the real apostles—those who were the companions of our Lord.” “ Neither Paul nor Peter ”, said the third, “ is fit to be compared with that eloquent and brilliant preacher who is versed in the philosophic learning of Alexandria. Yes, decidedly I am of Apollos.” But what of the remaining party, the

members of which said " I am of Christ " ? Possibly this was the claim of the Judaizers within the church, the " rigorists " of Jerusalem. The head of the Jerusalem church was James, and James was our Lord's kinsman. The rigorists would make much of this fact, would argue that one closely related to the Lord must have known his mind better than any other. Thus they would claim Christ's sanction for the views with which James was supposed to be identified, and would describe the members of the church over which he presided as the followers, not of this or another apostle, but " of Christ ". This, however, must not be taken as more than a possible explanation of a puzzling term.

xi, 17. In the first days of the church it seems to have been customary, in commemoration of the Last Supper, to accompany the Eucharist with a common meal — an *agape*, or " love-feast ". To the Corinthians it would seem the Christian equivalent of the feasts held in pagan temples. Carousing as an accompaniment of religion would not shock them in the same degree as it did Paul ; indeed, they knew that intoxication itself had a part in the Bacchic religious rites. Owing, probably, to Paul's rebuke of the disorderly scenes accompanying the Corinthian love-feast, it soon became customary in all the churches to separate the Eucharist from the *agape*.

xii, 1, etc. Our knowledge of the " gift of tongues " is very limited. But it seems to have been ecstatic speech, under the influence of strong religious emotion, in which the words uttered by the speaker were more or less unintelligible. Something of the same kind has been witnessed in comparatively

modern "revivalist" meetings. Some people in the Corinthian church claimed the power of speaking in an unknown tongue; others the power of interpreting such speech. There was considerable dispute about the relative value of the various spiritual gifts, and, in particular, whether that of preaching, or that of speaking in a mysterious tongue, were the more to be desired. Paul, with his strong common sense, replies that the gift of preaching should be placed first, because its possessor is able to benefit many, while the possessor of the gift of tongues only gratifies himself. He begins the answer to the questions about spiritual gifts and their respective values in chapter xii and continues it in chapter xiv. Between them he inserts his great panegyric of love. This is quite evidently not a passage dictated like the rest, put together as ideas occur to one speaker, but a symmetrical piece of carefully constructed writing. Perhaps it had been made long before, and was introduced by its author at this point into his present letter because of its appropriateness to his theme. Elsewhere in some of his letters Paul shows himself capable of extemporizing noble rhetoric, but here he is revealed as a great literary artist.

xiv, 34. It seems impossible to reconcile xi, 5, where Paul directs that every woman preaching or praying at a church meeting must have her head veiled, with this verse, which orders roundly: "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted unto them to speak". But this latter sentence no doubt represents Paul's wish, strengthened by his Jewish and rabbinic training. If women are anywhere to speak in church, at least let them be veiled—but he would much rather that

they did not speak at all, and this is the rule which he will try to enforce.

xv. Paul's resurrection doctrine is stated with great clarity in this striking chapter. Some at least of the Corinthians with whom he argues were ready to believe that Christ rose from the dead, yet not to believe in any other resurrection. Their view was probably derived from Platonism, which attributed immortality to the soul but regarded the body as a mere prison, from which the soul would be liberated by death. A doctrine which seemed to imply that after death the soul would still be linked with any kind of body would be repugnant to them. Paul meets them by insisting that the resurrection of Christ and the resurrection of man are inseparably connected. First he recapitulates the evidence for Christ's resurrection, and acceptance of its truth, he reminds them, is the very basis of their religion. Without it, all else falls. But then—and this is his main point—it is illogical to accept the resurrection of Christ and to deny the resurrection of man. Man recovers in Christ all that in Adam he lost, and this must include the full conquest of death, for otherwise Christ's conquest would be incomplete. And the full conquest of death involves a redemption of the body as well as of the soul. This does not imply that the resurrection body will be identical with the earthly body. Only a fool could suppose this! Why, even the growth of a crop supplies an analogy; the lifeless-seeming grain which is sown has a very different body from the new growth. The earthly body corresponds with that of Adam; the resurrection body will correspond with that of Christ. But if this is true of the dead who rise at Christ's return, Paul asks in

conclusion, what can be expected for those who are still alive here on that Day? A great change, when the mortal will put on immortality.

Such is the Pauline argument. There is real force in it. Of course the illustration of the grain cannot be pressed far, but it is only given as rough analogy, not an exact parallel. What matters more is the reasonableness of the contention that a redemption which did not include the body would be incomplete, and that, while it would be folly to expect our earthly bodies to rise from the grave, it would be equally unjustifiable to suppose that we should not have other and glorified bodies, fit vehicles of our spiritual nature.

2 CORINTHIANS

ANYONE whose acquaintance with this letter is merely casual should make the experiment of reading it through at a sitting. It is probable that he will feel perplexed before he reaches the end. At first its general tenor seems clear enough. It shows that either 1 Corinthians failed in its purpose or that not long afterwards Paul's relations with the Corinthian church had become severely strained. With the hope of improving them, he had paid another visit to Corinth. But either during that visit or a little later he had been attacked by bitter personal criticism, fomented by one specially unscrupulous enemy. These personal attacks on his honesty and good faith, this ingratitude and disloyalty of people for whom he had worked unsparingly, so grieved Paul that he felt near to death. At length he decided to send them a letter of the frankest kind, a letter which he knew must pain and distress them, a letter so outspoken that he himself for a time regretted having sent it.

Yet this letter did its work, and when Titus came back from Corinth, he was able to report that all was now well. The Corinthians had indeed been grieved by the "sorrowful letter", but had frankly owned their errors and the justice of Paul's censure. Now the difference is ended, the reconciliation complete. Paul writes to express his relief and happiness.

The whole atmosphere of the letter promises to be one of harmony and confidence. As things have turned out, writes Paul, he is glad indeed that he sent that outspoken rebuke. All is now right between him and the Corinthians. He has no fears for their future. "I rejoice", he says, "that in every respect I can now be of good courage concerning you."

So the reader makes his way through nine happy chapters of this Epistle. "Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift" is the triumphant ending of chapter ix. But then, as he passes to chapter x, there is a sudden change, a change as complete as it seems inexplicable. Harmony and confidence vanish. Again Paul is remonstrating passionately with those who traduce him, is defending himself in detail against their accusations. All the last four chapters are in this strain, until the final three verses are reached.

How are we to explain this vast difference between the first nine chapters and the last four? In fact the discrepancy, though evident enough, is not shown quite fully in our English version. As though anxious to minimize the incongruity of the second part, the translators toned down in some degree the vigour of Paul's phrases. Yet even so the contrast stands out clearly. What is its cause?

The most obvious answer seems to be that when Paul had written the first nine chapters news of a distressing kind suddenly reached him from Corinth, news which showed that his rejoicings had been premature. And it was the receipt of this distressing news which caused the second part of his letter to be strangely different in tone from the first. Yet it will probably occur to the reader that this explanation is inadequate. Let him imagine himself in Paul's

position. He is writing to a friend with whom he has had a difference. But the friend has frankly owned himself to be in the wrong, a happy and seemingly complete reconciliation has been made, and a letter is being written to welcome this fact. Before it is finished, news comes that, after all, the friend has gone back upon his word, is giving a ready ear to those who slander the writer, is repeating and spreading those slanders himself. What, then, would the writer do? One of two things: most probably he would tear up all that he had so far written, and begin another letter in a very different strain. Or else, if he still wished those earlier pages to be sent, he would begin the second part of the letter by saying what was the report that had just reached him, before adding his comments and remonstrances. What he would not do, what it is inconceivable that anyone would do, would be suddenly to change his tone half-way through the letter without so much as a hint of the reason. Yet we find this sudden alteration of tone in Paul's letter without one word to account for it.

We have, then, to look again for a key to the problem. Virtually the only other explanation is that in chapters i-ix we have a different letter, written at a different time, from that which occupies chapters x-xiii. This seems the more possible when we remember that the collection of Paul's letters which has come down to us was made and edited many years after his death. As we have noticed already, it includes only a part of his correspondence with the Corinthians. In addition to two complete letters—1 Corinthians and 2 Corinthians i-ix—the greater part of a third letter may have come into the editor's

hands. Unwilling that this should be lost to the Christian church, he appended it to 2 Corinthians, transferring to its end a few farewell sentences which had formed the conclusion of the earlier letter. Certainly Paul's quarrel with the Corinthians was still in progress when the chapters now forming x-xiii of 2 Corinthians were written ; no less certainly it had been brought to a happy end when 2 Corinthians i-ix were written, and it follows that what appear as the later chapters were earlier in the date than those which now precede them.

This has suggested another possibility. What became of the "sorrowful and painful" letter to which Paul refers in i-ix of this Epistle ? If, which seems fairly certain, 2 Corinthians is made up of two letters, may not its second part really be the "sorrowful" letter—or at least a large part of it ? Certainly the character of x-xiii seems to match this description fairly well. Of course no convincing proof is possible ; the most that can be said for the suggestion is that it seems plausible. When the editor of Paul's letters was sending out among them the letter contained in i-ix, with its many references to the earlier "sorrowful letter", to supplement it by adding that letter—or as much of it as he possessed—would seem natural enough. At least it is likely that Paul wrote four letters to the Corinthian church :

1. The letter mentioned in 1 Cor. v, 9.
2. The "First" Epistle to the Corinthians.
3. 2 Cor. x-xiii.
4. 2 Cor. i-ix.

Another suggestion is that we have also a fragment of No. 1 incorporated by the editor in

2 Corinthians, in the passage vi, 14-vii, 1. Its theme, as the reader will see on turning to it, is fellowship and marriage with unbelievers. Certainly it has the look of an interpolation. Omitting it, and proceeding directly from vi, 13 to vii, 2, we have—using the translation of *The Twentieth Century New Testament*—a perfectly coherent passage :

“ We have been speaking freely to you, men of Corinth ; we have opened our heart ; there is room there for you, yet there is not room in your love for us ! Can you not in return—I appeal to you as I should to children—open your hearts to us ? * Make room for us in your hearts. In no instance have we ever wronged or harmed or taken advantage of anyone. I am not saying this to condemn you. Indeed, I have already said that you are in our very heart. . . .”

But at the point marked with an asterisk we are interrupted by five verses about the dangers of fellowship with unbelievers which seem completely irrelevant. On the other hand, it must be remembered that (1) even if the irrelevant verses are a fragment from some other letter, it does not follow that this was the letter mentioned in 1 Cor. v, 9, and (2) that digressions which seem rather remote from his immediate theme are numerous in Paul's dictated letters. Yet, as a rule, at their beginning they have at least some connection with the main theme, though they digress further before a sudden return to the theme is made. But in this chapter the abrupt rules about marriage with unbelievers seem to have not the slightest connection with the verses that precede or those that follow them, while the verses that follow

the interpolation do seem the direct continuation of those that precede it.

Questions of this kind may seem academic, and without much concern for the ordinary Bible reader. Yet to be aware of them is virtually essential if he is to read 2 Corinthians intelligently. To sum up what has been said, we may perhaps arrive at the following conclusions :

- (i) It is almost certain that 2 Corinthians is a composite document, in which the editor brought together one complete letter and parts of one or more others.
- (ii) It is almost certain that chapters x-xiii of 2 Corinthians belong to another letter than that contained in chapters i-ix, and were written earlier.
- (iii) There is some probability—though nothing approaching certainty—in the view that x-xiii were part of the “sorrowful” letter alluded to in i-ix.
- (iv) The balance of probability is in favour of the view that vi, 14-vii, 1 is an interpolation, a passage taken from another of Paul's letters.
- (v) It is just possible that the letter from which, if the last-named theory is correct, it was taken may have been the letter mentioned by Paul in 1 Corinthians v, 9.

Adopting therefore the assumption that x-xiii and i-ix are separate letters, it seems better to treat them accordingly in the outline that follows, and to place them in their chronological order : first, the extract from letter No. 3, the letter of remonstrance and passionate self-defence ; and then letter No. 4, the

letter of happy reconciliation and restored confidence.

The extract from No. 3 begins abruptly, and ends with notes and warnings about Paul's forthcoming third visit to Corinth, when he will "deal sharply" with offending members of the church there, unless they have mended their ways. Verses 11-14 of chapter xiii clearly have been transposed from the end of chapter ix, where they rightly belong. Here, then, briefly summarized, are the two letters :

(10)—(13)

(10) Let me remind you of the gentleness of Christ when I, Paul, entreat you—you who charge me with inconsistency, with being gentle when I am with you and want to gain your favour, but outspoken when I rebuke you from a distance. You may find me outspoken enough when I come and deal with those who accuse me of worldliness! In the world we have to live, but it is not a worldly war that I wage. You, with your superficial view, boast of belonging in a special way to Christ—but this is a claim I am as fully entitled to make, and it is from him that my authority is derived. "His letters seem impressive enough," some of you declare, "but when you meet him you find an insignificant personality, with contemptible preaching powers." Let those who talk in this way know that when I come my actions will prove to be no less forcible than my letters. I will not dare to compare my abilities with those of such self-satisfied people! At least I am not boasting or exceeding the limits of truth when I remind you that it was I who brought you the Gospel. And—again without boasting, taking credit to myself for other men's work, or trespassing on their province—my success with you justifies the hope that I may be able to carry the Gospel to other, and more distant, regions. If a

man boasts, let him boast of his Christian faith. For it is not the self-praiser who stands the test, but he who is commended by our Lord.

(11) If you think me a fool, do try to tolerate my folly ! (It is natural, after all, that I, who won you for Christ, should be anxious lest you should be beguiled into error by a tempter, as Eve was.) For you show yourselves marvellously tolerant if someone comes who preaches a different Gospel from mine, a different Jesus, a different Spirit ! Why, then, not tolerate me ? For I do not count myself inferior to such “ apostles ”, important though they think themselves. However unpolished my speaking may be, at least I have knowledge enough to make my meaning clear.

I humbled myself that you might be exalted—by which I mean that I preached the Gospel to you without payment—and are you now bringing this as a charge against me ? As it were, I robbed other churches for your sake, taking pay from them that I might serve you freely. Even when I was reduced to want, it was members of the Macedonian churches who supplied my needs. I put you to no expense, and I am firmly resolved to keep to this rule so far as any part of Achaia is concerned. Why ? “ Because I have ceased to love you ? ” God knows this is not the reason ! But I shall carry on my practice unchanged, and discomfit those false apostles who pretend to be my superiors. “ Apostles ”, indeed ! They are frauds, whose end will be that which they deserve.

If you insist on thinking me a fool, you wiseacres, as a fool I will indulge in a little boasting. You are ready to put up with men who enslave you, spend your money, deceive you, ignore your wishes. I suppose I should apologize because I have not treated you in this way ! But at least I have as much to boast of as they. My religious pedigree as a Jew is as good as theirs. As ministers of Christ they have not suffered, as I have,

every kind of hardship, danger, persecution. Besides all such things, the daily care of all the churches rests on me, so that the troubles of every member become mine. God knows I do not exaggerate! And my sufferings are not merely a recent experience; even immediately after my conversion I was attacked in Damascus and only escaped arrest by being lowered in a basket through a loophole in the city wall.

(12) Then, if I am to boast, I will speak of spiritual visions—of an experience fourteen years ago, when I seemed to be caught up into paradise and heard what human lips may not repeat. It is of such abnormal privileges, not of my normal self that I boast—but, to save me from thinking too highly of myself, I was given a malady, a “thorn in the flesh”. Thrice I prayed the Lord that it might leave me, but he answered: “Enough for you to have my grace; in your weakness my strength can show itself most fully”. So I can boast of my weakness too! For it is just when I am seemingly weak that I am truly strong.

If in saying all this I am playing the fool, it is you who have driven me to it, instead of commending me. At least I am not inferior to any of your belauded “apostles”, insignificant though you think me. All the miracles that mark an apostle were done by me, and my treatment of you was exactly like my treatment of all the other churches—except that I did not put you to any expense, as I did the others. Do forgive me this terrible wrong! And I will not be an expense to you now when I come on my third visit; it is you, not your money, that I wish to gain. I am the parent, as it were, and you the children; to provide for the children is the parent’s duty. Right gladly for your sakes will I spend, or be spent. Do you mean to love me less than do other churches because I love you more?

Then you admit that I was not an expense to you, but declare that I was cunning and tricked you. Did I make

anything out of you by any of the messengers I sent ? When I sent Titus with a companion, did Titus make anything out of you ? Were not his motive and practice exactly like my own ?

Why am I defending myself at this length ? Not to satisfy you, but as speaking in the name of Christ in the presence of God, and in the hope of building up your characters. I am afraid lest when I come I shall find your behaviour not such as I could wish—when you will find me acting in a way you will not like ! Yes, I am afraid of finding squabbles, jealousy, self-assertion, disorder—afraid, too, of discovering that those who some time ago were rebuked for sins of impurity have not truly repented of their misdeeds.

(13) I am coming to you for the third time—a third visit which will be like a third witness, as it were ; and you remember the word of the Law : “ Two or three witnesses establish a statement ”. On my second visit I warned the wrong-doers, and I repeat the warning now, that I shall not spare them when I come again. That will be the proof that I am the spokesman of Christ—not of a weak but a strong Christ, crucified in weakness, but living through the power of God. If I share his weakness, in dealing with you I shall also share his strength. Test yourselves, to see if you hold the true faith ; unless Christ is in you, you fail under the test. You will find, I hope, that I do not so fail—and I pray that you may do right, not to prove my success, but that you may be justified, whether or no I fail. But, whatever the issue, it is for the truth, not against it, that I must work. I am content to be weak if you are really strong ; your growth into complete goodness is all I ask. I have written sharply to you now in order that I may not have to deal sharply with you when I come ; then my authority can be used, as God who gave it me would wish, for building up, not for destruction. . . .

NOTES

i, 7. The people who claimed in a special way to "belong" to Christ were probably the "Christ party" mentioned in 1 Cor. i, 12. See the note on that verse.

xi, 7. When Paul came to Corinth, he joined Aquila and Priscilla, who, like himself, knew how to weave tent-cloth (Acts xviii, 2), and earned enough to live upon by this handicraft. This enabled him—a point on which he greatly prided himself—to dispense with the pecuniary support he was entitled to claim from the Corinthian church. But some at least of its members were far from grateful. Possibly those who formed the "Peter", "Apollos" and "Christ" parties within it felt that Paul's dominating influence would be reduced were he their paid minister instead of being a self-supporting autocrat. There were suggestions, too, that Paul could well afford to take nothing from the Corinthians because he had done extremely well out of other churches. Yet others implied that his attitude was an insult to the Corinthian church, which was as able as any other to meet just demands on it. But the sacrifice which Paul had made was real. It would have been far pleasanter and easier to receive a maintenance allowance from the Corinthian church than to do a hard day's manual labour in addition to his apostle's work of preaching, teaching, interviewing, organizing. Therefore the ingratitude and misrepresentations of his critics at Corinth hurt him deeply. When he has dealt with the subject in his letter he feels bound to return to it. He uses bitter irony (xii, 13): "In what way did I treat you as inferior to any other

church, except that I did not become an expense to you? You must try to forgive this shocking wrong!"

xi, 24, etc. It will be noticed that Paul gives another list of his various afflictions in vi, 4, etc. This seems a small piece of evidence confirming the view that x-xiii and i-ix are separate compositions; it seems unlikely that Paul would have given the two lists in the same letter.

(1) — (9)

(1) Paul the Apostle and Timothy greet, and wish God's blessing upon, the church at Corinth and Christians throughout Achaia.

I thank God who comforts me that I may bring comfort to others. If I suffer for Christ's sake, through him comes my consolation. You, in turn, share both affliction and consolation with me. Troubles altogether beyond my power of bearing befell me when I was in the province of Asia, so that I believed myself to be on the point of death. But God delivered me, as he will deliver me again, and you, having helped me by your prayers, will be able to join in my thanksgiving.

At least I can feel that I have been straightforward and sincere, particularly in my relations with you. My letters are frank; there is no hidden meaning in them. My hope is that on the Day of Judgment you will be able to feel proud of me, your apostle—as in some degree you have felt proud already—and I to feel proud of you, my converts.

With some such feeling in my mind, I thought of visiting you on my way to and from Macedonia. Was it mere fickleness which made me change this plan? Am I untrustworthy, one whose "yes" may mean "no"? Far from it, for I am the disciple of, and preached to you a Lord who does not change, whose Spirit marked me as his own.

No; as God is my witness, it was simply to spare you

that I cancelled that visit to Corinth. (Do not take me to mean that I claim to control your religion : it is your own, and my one aim is to contribute to your happiness.) (2) I determined not to pay you another painful visit ; when I have to pain you, I pain the very people from whom I myself hope to gain happiness ! Therefore instead of coming, I wrote you a letter—feeling even then that my relief would be yours also—a letter written with grief and tears, which yet, I hoped, should not so much pain you by its frankness as prove my deep love for you.

(Now let me speak about the leader of those who slandered me at Corinth, whom, after your return to a better frame of mind, you punished.) The wrong he did was felt not so much by me as by you—or, not to overstate the truth, by many of you. Let the punishment your collective judgment inflicted suffice ; now forgive him, if you are ready to obey me, as I forgive him for the sake of Christ. Satan tempts us to want of mercy ; I have reason to know how subtle his devices are !

When I had come to Troas to preach the Gospel, though there was a great opportunity for me I could not use it, so depressed I was at not finding Titus with news of you, and I journeyed on to Macedonia. But now I can thank God that he makes me, as it were, a censer-bearer in a procession of triumph, and if the fragrance is one of death to those who are spiritually dying, it is one of life to those who are being saved. Who is fit for such a task ? I can claim to be, because I do not preach, like many, a perverted Gospel, but preach Christ fully and sincerely, as in God's sight.

(3) Does this suggest that I am again sounding my own praises ? Or do I need, as some do, a formal certificate ? Why, you are my certificate, which all men can read—you are, as it were, my letter, written not with pen and ink but on my heart. Again, this is not self-praise ; what I believe of my powers is due to confidence not in myself but in God,

who has made me fit to be a minister of the New Testament—a Testament not of the written Law, which kills, but of the Divine Spirit, the life-giver. If, as the Scriptures record, the giving of the religion of the Law, which condemns man, was glorious—we read how Moses was invested with a brief but dazzling glory as he descended from the Mount—how far greater and more lasting must be the glory which invests the religion of the Spirit! And I have no need to veil myself and my teaching, as Moses was veiled—and as the inner meaning of the Law itself is still veiled from those who know not the Lord, its interpreter. “The Lord” means the Spirit, and where he is, there are open sight and liberty. And we all, seeing here, as if in a mirror, the glory of the Lord, are ourselves being transformed through successive stages of glory, through the gift of the Spirit.

(4) Having such a ministry committed to me by God, I cannot lose heart, and I preach the Gospel fully and openly, without subterfuge. Only to those who are spiritually dying can my message seem to be veiled. And it is Christ, not myself, whom I proclaim; I am merely your servant for his sake. But, a human being, I have this divine treasure in an earthen vessel, to show that the power of its message is of God, not of myself: I have to suffer every trouble, of mind and body, yet am not overcome by them. I share the death of Christ—as you, in some measure, share his life—yet I am sure that God, who raised him from the dead, will raise both you and me from death. All is for your sake, and your thanksgiving should increase continually. For my own part, I never despair. If my body weakens, my soul is renewed in strength daily. The passing troubles of this time are preparing an eternal glory for those of us whose eyes are fixed on the things unseen rather than on the seen, for the seen is of the moment, the unseen of eternity.

(5) If this earthly home of mine falls, I have an im-

perishable home in heaven. Here in this life I sigh for that which is to come, when I shall not be bare spirit, but clothed with an immortal body, and I find the pledge of this in my possession of the Holy Spirit already bestowed on me by God. Whatever happens, then, I am of good courage. Here, in my mortal body, I am away from the Lord, and must walk by faith, not sight ; I would rather quit my body and be with the Lord—but whether in this stage of life or in that, my one aim must be to please him, before whose judgment-seat all of us must appear.

It is with this thought in my mind—not, as some aver, to gain human favour—that I try to win men to salvation. My actions are clear to God—and, as I hope, to you also. I am not singing my own praises ! No, I am giving you grounds for defending me from my traducers. Some people think me mad ? Well, let God decide that ; at least I am sane enough in my zeal for you. My one concern is to set forth the power of Christ's death and resurrection. This doctrine supplies a new standard of values. If in bygone years I estimated Christ himself by the old standard of external values, such as Judaism supplied, no longer do I think of him in this way. And the true Christian is not merely a man altered but a man re-made ; everything is changed for him. This is the gift of God, who has become man's friend through the work of Christ, and to proclaim this is the mission entrusted to me. So I appeal to you : become friends of God, who pardons your sins for the sake of the sinless Christ. (6) Do not delay to avail yourselves of his loving-kindness. Remember that saying about " an acceptable time " ; the acceptable time is now ! For my part, I help, not hinder, all who seek God ; to do otherwise would be to discredit my ministry. I prove myself a faithful minister by the sufferings, mental and bodily, I endure—and yet there are spiritual compensations which turn my afflictions into happiness, my poverty into wealth.

I have been speaking without reserve to you, O Corinthians, with an open heart, in which there is a place for you—is there none in your hearts for me? (7, verse 3) Yes, make room for me in your heart; I have done none of you any wrong! Do not suppose that in asking this I am finding fault with you. As I have already told you, you are in the depth of my heart; my life is bound up with yours. I place the fullest trust in you, I boast about you; in spite of all my troubles, you have made my heart overflow with happiness. Yes, I was still suffering from every kind of trouble—fightings without, fears within—when I reached Macedonia. But the arrival of Titus with his news of you changed all this; I was comforted and delighted when I knew how you regretted the past, how wholly you were now on my side against my adversaries.

So I can no longer regret that I sent you the letter which pained you. For a time I did regret having sent it, but now I am glad—not because it pained you, but because it led you to repent. Worldly pain ends in death, but this divine pain has brought you repentance—and how complete is the change it has made in you! In every way you have proved your sincerity. You understand that I wrote the letter not on account of the wrong-doer, or of myself, whom he wronged, but in order that your real affection for me might be brought to light. But now I am wholly comforted, and share the delight your repentance gave to Titus. I had boasted about you to him, and my boasts have been justified. He remembers gratefully how you received him in exactly the right way, and I rejoice over the full confidence I can feel about you.

(8) (Now I turn to the subject of the fund for the poor Christians at Jerusalem, and ask your support for it.) You know how God has shown his love to the churches in Macedonia. In spite of their troubles, they have given to the full extent of their means—yes, and beyond it, having first given themselves unto the Lord. So I have asked Titus,

already well known to you, to organize the same kind of contribution from you. Mind, I am making suggestions, not giving commands. But you had already taken some steps in this matter, a year before the other churches, and now I want you to complete the work, showing yourselves as liberal as you have already shown yourselves faithful and loving. For in this too you will be following the example of Christ. Give, then, according to your means ; at the present time your abundance will supply what others lack ; later on, they may be able to supply what you lack—and so there will be equality, as the Book of Exodus says that there was for the manna-gatherers.

I am sending Titus to you to put this matter in hand ; his eagerness about it equals my own, and of his own accord he offered to go. With him I send a brother whose repute as a Christian worker stands high in all the churches, and he has been chosen as a delegate to accompany me when I go to administer this fund, thereby glorifying God. By this means I guard against any accusation concerning the manner of administration ; I want a method which will commend itself to man's judgment as well as being honest in the sight of God. And I am sending another well-tested brother also. If any questions are asked about Titus, enough to say that he is my close associate, while as for the brethren who accompany him, they are the chosen representatives of the churches. Show them, then, how well you can love, and justify my confidence in you.

(9) I need say no more about this collection for your fellow-Christians, for your readiness to help is a fact I impress upon the Macedonians, telling them that you were prepared to do your part a year ago, and your lead has encouraged them. Now I send the brethren to prove that I had good grounds for boasting about you in this way. I should indeed be ashamed—and you also !—if the Macedonians should find after all that the work of collect-

ing had not been completed. I want your contribution to be ready in good time, and as a generous gift, not as a forced levy. As a man sows he will reap, and it is the cheerful giver whom God loves. As the scripture reminds you, God will unfailingly provide for your own needs if you give to others. And what you do will cause other Christians to praise God about you, for your acceptance of the Gospel and for your liberality. They will pray for you and feel drawn to you, perceiving what God has done for you. Thanks be to him for his gift, which no words can describe!

(13, verse 11) Farewell, my brothers. Aim at the highest ideal, live in concord, and the God of love and peace will be with you. Greet one another with the ceremonial kiss. All the members of the church here salute you. May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all.

NOTES

It will be observed that, in order not to break the sequence of thought, the interpolated passage from another letter—vi, 14–vii, 1—has been omitted from this outline.

ii, 12, 13. Paul compares himself to one of the incense-bearers who took part in triumphal processions; his message has a divine fragrance, like incense.

iii, 1–vi, 10 is a part of this letter which has special value and interest. Now that the Corinthians are happily reunited with Paul in close friendship, he takes them into his confidence and gives them an intimate picture of a Christian missionary's ideals, aims and methods, as he himself sees them. The ministry is not less glorious because of the personal weakness of those who exercise it, and its rewards

outweigh every human loss. A Christian, he holds, is not one who merely modifies his attitude to the world in certain respects, who adds certain virtues to his life or abandons certain faults. He is a new creation whose whole outlook and conception of life are transformed. There can be no thought of his working for his own fame or popularity—charges often brought against Paul by his opponents; so close becomes his mystical union with Christ that all his desires and all his message become those which Christ has given him. Paul makes this claim without a trace of vanity; he frankly admits his own weakness, and it is not himself but the ministry entrusted to him that he extols.

viii-ix. It may seem curious, at first sight, that Paul should devote so much of his letter to the prosaic matter of the collection which he was making to aid the Christians in Jerusalem. The whole of these two chapters is occupied by this one topic, and there is a good deal of repetition in what is said in them. Quite clearly, then, it is a matter to which he attached great importance, and there are passages in Acts which strengthen this impression. The reasons are fairly evident. When the Jerusalem authorities consented to Paul's proposal that he should preach the Gospel among the Gentiles, they requested that he would use his opportunities of raising money from his wealthier congregations to assist the Jerusalem church, Paul readily accepted the suggestion, and made it a point of honour to do the work thoroughly. The reader will notice how skilfully he promotes a friendly competition in giving between Achaia and Macedonia by telling each of them how well the other is doing! But he had a

motive deeper than this for wishing to bring a really large sum to Jerusalem. One of his most difficult tasks, as he created separate churches in different parts of Europe and Asia, was to foster a sense of unity among them, to make each local branch realize that it was a part of one church. The collection he had undertaken gave him a direct means of encouraging the sense of unity. The lingering dislike of Gentile Christians among Jewish Christians could not be overcome more effectively than by the arrival of large gifts from the Gentiles to the Jerusalem Christians at a time when famine had made their privations acute. That Europeans should assist Palestinians in this practical way would be a symbol of the new brotherhood which the church was to promote.

Paul's enthusiasm for this cause made him insist that he must himself carry the gift to Jerusalem and superintend its distribution. The fulfilment of this resolve was to cost him his liberty, and, ultimately his life. In his letter to the Romans (xv, 25) he tells them that, much as he desires to visit them, he cannot come until he has performed this duty. Its dangers were great. Jerusalem at this time was seething with unrest. On his journey to it he confessed his forebodings of what might befall him in Jerusalem to his friends at Ephesus (Acts xx, 21, 22). At Caesarea other friends, having listened to the predictions of Agabus, entreated Paul "not to go up to Jerusalem" (Acts xxi, 12). "Why do you weep and break my heart?" he answered. "I am ready not only to be bound but to suffer death at Jerusalem for the sake of the Lord Jesus." So he went to Jerusalem, and it was not long before his

arrest followed. But for the duty, as he saw it, of bringing the collection himself to Jerusalem, he would have gone to Rome as a welcome guest of the church there. When he did reach it, it was as a prisoner.

ROMANS

THIS, if not perhaps the most attractive, may well be reckoned the greatest of Paul's letters. Certainly no other has influenced Christian thought in a comparable degree. It had an immense vogue in the sixteenth century, when it was, in every sense of the phrase, the textbook of the Reformation leaders. But the modern reader, happily, does not wish to find in it a collection of arguments which he can use in theological disputes, and if he is asked whether Romans is one of his favourite books in the New Testament, he is likely enough to answer that it is much too "difficult", that often he cannot make head or tail of its meaning. There are, he admits, some quite glorious passages in it, such as the ending of its eighth chapter. The practical rules of conduct towards the end, again, seem intelligible enough. But the earlier part, with its involved doctrinal reasoning, its seemingly inconsequent sentences, its use of fragmentary quotations from the Old Testament, merely bewilders him. Often he cannot make out what Paul is trying to prove, and when he can grasp this, he doubts if it can have much real importance for people of the twentieth century. Something like this, it must be admitted frankly, is the general impression made by the Epistle to the Romans on a large proportion of intelligent men and women to-day

Yet it is a view which at least may be modified by even a brief study of the letter itself, the circumstances in which it was written, the characteristics of its writer, and the special purposes he had in mind. All his other letters, with the exception of that to Colossae, were addressed to places he had already visited. Therefore he had no need in these letters to repeat the doctrinal teaching which he had given by word of mouth. He would supplement it when he wrote, he would insist again on such points as his converts seemed in danger of forgetting, and he would reply to questions they had sent him. But he could safely assume that his preaching had made them well acquainted with his fundamental beliefs.

He could not credit the Christian community in Rome with such knowledge. For a long time, as he explains, he had been anxious to visit this city, but had been prevented from fulfilling his wish. At last, however, he believes the opportunity is near. His immediate task is to take to Jerusalem the money he has collected and to superintend its distribution. As soon as this is finished, he proposes to make his way towards Rome. Meanwhile he sends a letter as a preparation for his visit. He wishes the Christians at Rome to know in advance the main points of his theology. His task when he arrives will be easier, and suspicions which his opponents are already trying to arouse will be allayed, if the Roman Christians have already been enabled to study a summary of his doctrinal views. This is the reason why Romans, far more than any of the other letters, has the character, to some extent of a doctrinal treatise.

Paul knows enough of Rome to realize that in this

great capital of the Empire he will meet, and must try to reconcile, divergent types of thought, which elsewhere he has encountered singly. When he wrote to Galatia, he was addressing a Jewish-minded Christian church, in danger of being perverted by the Judaizers. When he wrote to Corinth, he was addressing a Greek-minded Christian church, in danger of being led astray by pagan influence. But in Rome, with its huge mixed population, both the Palestinian and the Hellenistic tendencies are at work. He will find there a large Jewish settlement, including Jewish Christians reluctant to believe that Gentiles can be brought within the Divine scheme. He will find there also a large Greek-speaking Gentile community, which despises the Jews and proposes to combine, by a syncretistic process, acceptance of Christianity with retention of pagan philosophy and pagan laxity of morals.

Such, then, as he foresees it, will be his task. He has to protect Christianity in Rome against these two contrasting dangers. He has to purge both Judaic conservatism and Hellenistic liberalism from their errors of excess. That done, and having shown mercilessly the inadequacy of both schools of thought when separated from the redeeming power of Christ, he has to insist on the potential good in each, and the contribution which each can make to the Christian church as a whole. This delicate work of adjustment and reconciliation between two seemingly irreconcilable developments within the church is the main purpose of this letter. Chapter x, verse 12, sums up its message: "There is no difference between the Jew and the Greek; for the same Lord is rich unto all that call upon him".

With this general purpose in his mind, the reader will be able to follow the drift of the doctrinal chapters in this Epistle. He may not understand every detail of the often obscure and involved reasoning, and, to be frank, it is not worth his while to try. So long as he can discern the general sense of a passage, he may wisely be content to leave its cryptic arguments and enigmas unsolved. Sections of the letter which the modern reader finds difficult and confusing, arguments which seem to him forced and unconvincing, were not, after all, set down with an eye to his needs, but to those of rabbi-taught Jews at Rome in the first century. "To the Jews", as Paul himself said, "I became as a Jew"; he reverted to arguments of the type which were admired in rabbinical circles, to verbal quibbles, to the use of Old Testament quotations forced into meanings which their writers did not intend. It was artificial pleading of a kind which had delighted Paul when he was a pupil of Gamaliel. Naturally enough, he had never quite freed himself from that early Pharisaic influence, while he felt that reasoning of this kind would make a quite special appeal to the educated Jewish readers of his letter. From any other point of view this type of argument, based upon perversions of the Old Testament scriptures, is almost worthless. (A sustained example of it will be found in the fourth chapter of the Epistle.) The general, as distinct from the scholastic, reader need not spend much time over its difficult, ingenious but unconvincing subtleties. Judged from the modern standpoint, such passages in this Roman letter show Paul at his worst.

Yet there are others in this same letter which

reveal him at his greatest, passages profound in thought, or stirring in their impassioned eloquence, or infinitely moving in the wide charity, the understanding of human nature and its needs which they show. In these not a trace of the Pharisee can be found; they overflow with intense faith in God and love of mankind. Here is a man who sweeps away all racial and sectarian differences. He will set no limit, on the one hand, to the saving power of the gospel or, on the other, to the people whom it can save. These pages, it must be remembered, often as tender as they are forcible, breathing the very spirit of a comprehensive liberalism, are the work of one brought up in the strictest tradition of Judaism, who is still devoted to his race and proud of its history. That they come from such a source enhances their marvel. It seems incredible that anyone who knows them should still disparage Paul as a narrow-minded ecclesiastic impoverishing the Christian faith.

Some parts of this letter, in which the sequence of thought seems hard to follow, become easier to understand when the reader notices that Paul has put them into the form of a dialogue with an imaginary opponent. His own Pharisaic training makes him aware of what will seem the weak points of his argument to a Pharisaic critic. Often, therefore, when he is stating his case he breaks off to insert the objection which, he feels, an opponent may make to what he has just said. Then he answers this imaginary opponent before returning to his main theme. As an assistance to the reader, in the summary of the letter which follows the remarks attributed by Paul to a Judaizer-critic have the letter (J.) prefixed to them, and are set between inverted commas.

It is evident that this letter, with its frequently profound thought, is addressed to educated readers. We know nothing of the church in Rome at this period. The earliest tradition names Paul and Peter jointly as its "founders", but this letter shows that a Christian community existed before Paul came to Rome. It is also most unlikely that Peter was already resident in this city; if he had been, Paul would surely have mentioned him and sent him some greeting in his letter. On the other hand, there is no reason for doubting the early tradition that both Paul and Peter were martyred in Rome, and there is some indirect evidence to suggest that Paul during his captivity summoned Peter to join him. The influence which they must have had on the development of Christianity in Rome, and the fact that it was the place in which both were put to death, would be sufficient to link their names with its church. But before either of them had set foot in that city it contained a substantial number of Christians, both of Jewish and Gentile origin. Probably enough there was no one "founder" of this church, its earliest members having become Christians elsewhere before coming to stay or to reside permanently in Rome. Business brought people from every part of the Empire to its capital. Greek had provided them with a universal language and—except perhaps in the aristocratic quarter—more Greek than Latin would be heard at this time in the streets of Rome.

Romans ends with a doxology—an ascription of praise to God—which in our Bible fills verses 25-27 of chapter xvi. In some early days a "shortened edition", so to speak, of the Epistle seems to have had some vogue; in this chapters xv and xvi are

absent, and the doxology is transferred to the end of chapter xiv. In 1930 the oldest copy of the Pauline letters we possess was discovered—a remarkable papyrus, not much later than the year 200. Here chapters xv and xvi are included, but the doxology appears at the close of xv. This has been thought to strengthen a view already held on other grounds—that the Roman letter really ends with chapter xv, and that xvi is a separate document.

It seems to be a letter of introduction, commending one Phoebe to the leaders of some church she is about to visit. The introduction is followed by a long list of greetings, sent by Paul to friends of his. No fewer than twenty-six people are greeted. The question naturally suggests itself whether Paul would have so many friends in a distant place he had never visited. Some of the messages show that he knows not merely their names but their circumstances, their family relationships, and their work. How could he be so conversant with the affairs of all these people in Rome? Again, the greetings are followed by a warning against those “who are causing divisions”, very different in style from any part of the earlier chapters.

It does therefore seem highly probable, though there cannot be certainty, that chapter xvi is a short separate letter, and that the place to which Phoebe would take it was Ephesus, where Paul had a wealth of friends. Perhaps this note was preserved at Ephesus, and when the collection of Paul's letters was put together there, some twenty-five years after his death, the editor, wishing to make it as complete as possible, determined to include this little letter of introduction given to Phoebe. The end of the

Roman letter seemed as good as any other place for its insertion. There seems no convincing reason for detaching from it the doxology with which it ends. Its style is markedly different from that of Romans, and resembles that of the "Ephesian" Epistle. It looks out of place if it is transferred to the end of Romans xv. This requires us to follow verse 33, "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen" with "Now to him that is able", etc. It has been argued that xv, 33 is too slight a sentence to round off this long and majestic letter. But the main part of Romans—the doctrinal part—reaches its conclusion at the end of chapter xi, and is duly rounded off with a full and superb doxology (verses 33-36) beginning "O the depth of the riches" and ending: "For of him, and through him, and unto him, are all things. To him be the glory for ever. Amen." Chapters xii-xv are in the nature of a supplement—though an essential supplement—of plain and homely rules about Christian conduct. Another eloquent doxology at their close would seem quite out of place. Nothing could round them off more suitably than the single sentence: "Now the God of peace be with you all. Amen."

Whether or no what is printed as chapter xvi really belongs to the Epistle to the Romans, or is a short separate letter, remains, obviously, a detail of secondary importance. Yet a sound literary instinct will already have suggested to many readers that this chapter seems incongruous as a part of Romans, while a larger public must have doubted the wisdom of retaining it in the church lectionary. Certainly we appreciate Paul's character the better for noticing how many and how various were his friends, how great

his courtesy in sending them individual greetings. Yet the reading aloud in church of Romans xvi, with its long list of names, cannot greatly edify a congregation—and often it imposes a severe strain on the lay reader, uncertain how some of these Greek and Latin names should be pronounced ! The case for omitting it from the lectionary will be strengthened if the opinion held by a large majority of competent scholars is accepted, and this chapter is taken as a short letter of introduction for Phoebe, written by Paul, but forming no part of his letter to the Christians of Rome.

This was the last letter written by Paul before he became a prisoner. It shows him at the height of his powers. The development of his thought has gone far beyond the stage reached when he wrote his Thessalonian letters. The false doctrine which was misleading the Galatian church, and threatening to undo all his work there, was not without its representatives in Rome, yet not in such force that he had to devote his whole space to refuting them. The Galatian letter was necessarily destructive ; this could be constructive. He could set forth in it the scheme of theological thought which had been gradually completed by experience and meditation since he became a Christian. He could do this the more easily because his readers at Rome, unlike those at Corinth, had not to be “ fed on milk ” ; on the contrary, they would be capable of following his deepest thoughts.

As has already been mentioned, some of the rabbinic arguments addressed to the Jews in this letter are apt to baffle the average reader, and, at best, are ingenious rather than convincing. But, if he is wise

enough to pass quickly over these, he will find that to grapple with the rest of the letter, undeterred by its supposed difficulty, will be well worth while. Paul's "doctrine of justification by faith" is no remote speculation of theology but a luminous and convincing effort to discern the scheme of God's dealings with mankind. And considerable parts of Romans are in no way obscure. Not only are they magnificent literature, but they supply the reader with spiritual truth, with encouraging thoughts, with sound practical advice.

Before beginning the Epistle it is a help to fix in the mind the main sequence of its thought. Setting aside the personal greetings and news with which it begins and ends, the general theme may be defined as "the new relationship between God and man, and between man and man, which the work of Christ has made possible", and it is developed as follows :

- i ; ii ; iii, 1-20.—How necessary was a new relationship is shown by the moral failure of Gentiles and Jews alike.
- iii, 21 ; iv.—The basis of the new relationship must be personal faith, not external conformity with the code of the Law. Even in the Old Testament this was illustrated by the story of Abraham.
- v.—The difference which the work of Christ has made.
- vi ; vii.—Possible objections to the doctrine of the new relationship considered and answered.
- viii.—How Christ's work is continued and completed by the Spirit.
- ix ; x ; xi.—The new relationship seems to

involve the rejection of the Jews. The answer to this difficulty.

- xii; xiii; xiv; xv, 13.—Practical rules of Christian conduct which must follow an acceptance of the new relationship.

The remainder of xv is taken up with Paul's news and plans, while xvi, as has been shown, probably does not belong to this Epistle.

A fuller outline may now be attempted. But it is more difficult to supply this in the instance of Romans than of any other epistle. Some passages in it, such as the close of chapter viii, are so glorious as they stand that any abbreviation of them would seem an outrage. Others, like the practical rules which begin with chapter xii, are already so condensed that further shortening of them is often impracticable. These brief *staccato* laws of Christian behaviour, ranging over almost every department of religious, civic and personal life, must be read as they were impetuously dictated. Few of them call for explanation; it is fulfilment which they need!

(1) To all Christian folk in Rome I send my blessing—I, Paul, an apostle chosen by God to preach the Gospel of Christ, who, foretold by the prophets and born of David's line, was revealed as the Son of God by his resurrection. Through him I have been called to summon men of all nations, including yourselves, to receive and obey the Gospel.

My first words shall be of thanksgiving for your faith, the repute of which is becoming world-wide. God knows how continually you are in my prayers, as I ask that an opportunity of visiting you may be given me, when I may help you, as you also will help me. Often I wanted to

come, but was thwarted ; I longed for some such fruitful labour among you as I have had among men of other lands. For my special mission is to the Gentiles, both the cultured and the ignorant. Therefore I long to preach to you in Rome. It is a Gospel of salvation which I bring for everyone, whether Jew or Gentile, who will believe in Christ. "Through faith is the way to life", as the scriptures say.

But there is a message of Divine wrath also for those whose wickedness conceals the truth of God. They could not be ignorant of him, because the creation itself reveals the creator. Yet they denied him worship, and in their ingratitude turned to vain philosophy and to idolatry. And so they sank, men and women alike, to the lowest forms of sexual vice and perversion, till they lost every kindly human instinct, and not only did deeds which, as they knew, made them in God's sight unfit to live, but took pleasure in doing them.

(2) Some of you, being Jews, are ready enough to condemn these Gentile sinners—but how can you, if you are guilty of the same things yourselves? "God's judgment of such vices is just", you say; then how do you suppose you, who condemn in others what you practise yourselves, will escape this judgment? Do you not realize that the forbearance God has shown has been granted in order to give you an opportunity for repentance? Your obstinacy will bring his wrath on you at the Day of Judgment, when those patiently trying to do good will be rewarded, and those wilfully disobedient will be punished—yes, Jew and Gentile alike; there is no partiality with God! The sin of Jews, who have the Law, the sin of Gentiles, who have it not, will alike be punished. As for the Jews, it is not possession of the Law but obedience to it which counts; as for the Gentiles, the promptings of conscience for them take the place of the Law, and by their obedience to conscience they will be judged on that Day when, as the Gospel

I preach declares, the inmost secrets of men's hearts will be revealed.

But I seem to hear a protest. You are a Jew, you say, one of God's chosen race, you are well versed in the Law, you claim to be a light to those in darkness, because the Law contains all necessary truth and knowledge . . . well, you teacher, have you ever tried to teach yourself? You insist on the importance of the Commandments; but do you yourself break them? You brag about your knowledge of the Law; are you dishonouring God by transgressing it? As the sacred writings say, it is your behaviour which lowers God's repute among the Gentiles! Circumcision has its value if you keep the Law; it is worthless if you break it. Is not a man outside God's chosen people who acts in accordance with the Law a better Jew than you who, having been given the Law, transgress it? Shall not the man who, as a Gentile, is uncircumcised, put to shame you who, for all your circumcision and written code, break the Law? The real Jew, the true member of God's chosen people, is not he who literally is circumcised but one whose circumcision is, as it were, of his inward self, and he earns the praise not of man, but of God.

(3) (J.) "If you believe this, what gain is there in being a Jew, and of what use is circumcision?" There is considerable gain; to name one point, it was to the Jews that the scriptures were given. (J.) "If we admit that some of them have failed, must we suppose that their failure has cancelled God's promises?" By no means; God's word is constant however false man may be. (J.) "Then this contrast heightens the glory of God; if I heighten God's glory by my sin, am I to be punished? If, as you suggest, this good, this increased glory of God, results from wrongdoing, then let us do evil that good may come!"—a pernicious doctrine, often attributed to me. Just is the condemnation of those who argue in such fashion.

No, we Jews are not superior to the Gentiles; I have

already shown—and I can quote scripture in support of what I said—that Jews and Gentiles alike are sinners ; none has attained true righteousness. True, the Law has a message for us who are under the Law, but its effect is to make us conscious of our sin. But now there is a new righteousness, quite apart from the Law, a righteousness given by God to all, without distinction, who have faith in Jesus Christ. All have sinned, but all can be pronounced righteous through the deliverance Christ gave by the shedding of his blood. So, too, the righteousness of God is vindicated ; in the past, he forbore to punish sins ; in the present, just himself, he justifies the man who has faith in Jesus.

What then, my fellow-Jews may ask, becomes of our boasts about our national heritage ? They are now ruled out. Is this on the principle that we have failed, because only complete obedience could satisfy the Law ? No ; it is on the new principle of faith, for my view is that a man is accepted as righteous on the ground of his faith, quite apart from his obedience to the Law. Can we any longer think of God as the God of the Jews alone ? No ; he is the God of the Gentiles also, and it is by the same faith that both the circumcised and the uncircumcised are justified. Are you afraid that this doctrine of faith in effect abolishes the Law ? On the contrary, it upholds the Law.

(4) This chapter, as has been pointed out in the introduction, is a digression, a purely rabbinic excursus, inserted to please those of Paul's readers who delighted in this type of argument. There is no need to linger over its details. It attempts to elucidate the position of Abraham by a rabbinic use of Old Testament quotations, and the main points which it is designed to establish are : (i) that Abraham was "justified" and accounted "righteous"

in God's sight not as the result of his deeds but of his faith, and with him circumcision was only a "seal", a recognition, of the righteousness which he had already when uncircumcised; and (ii) that as Abraham was to be "a father of many nations", this term must include others than the Jews. In fact, all who follow his example of faith, Gentiles no less than Jews, must be reckoned as, spiritually, his descendants. And the Old Testament saying that Abraham's faith "was regarded as righteousness", Paul concludes, has a permanent significance (iv, 23):

So will our own faith be regarded by God, if we have faith in him who raised Jesus from the dead—Jesus, who died to make atonement for our sins, and was raised to life that we might be accounted righteous. (5) Now that we too have been justified by faith, we should be glad of that reconciliation with God which is ours through Christ, and, already triumphant, hope for our attainment to the Divine ideal. Indeed, even our troubles can be the source of triumph to us! For trouble leads to endurance, endurance strengthens character, and a strong character gains a hope that cannot prove false.

The teaching of the Holy Spirit has made us sure of God's love, showing that Christ died for sinners. Once in a way, someone might be ready to give his life for the sake of a good man, but God's love is proved by the fact that it was while we were sinners that Christ died for us. And even more follows! For if reconciliation with God was brought about for us by the death of Christ while we were sinners, in a yet deeper sense, now that we are reconciled, we shall be saved by Christ's life. Yes, we exult indeed over this atonement which Jesus Christ, our Lord, has gained for us!

If you ask how the single power of Christ can bring life to all mankind, remember the story of Adam. One man

brought into the world sin, and all mankind shared his sin and the death which is sin's penalty. Sin was in the world even before the Law was given to reveal its sinfulness. But as the sin of one man brought condemnation to all the world by his disobedience, so the perfect obedience of Christ can bring righteousness to all the human race. The effect of the Law was to accentuate sin, yet, when sin increased, the grace of God increased yet more, in order that as sin had reigned in the realm of death, God's loving-kindness might reign with a righteousness leading to eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord.

(6) Now let us consider the objections my opponents may raise. (J.) "You have said that 'where sin abounded, grace did much more abound'. The logical conclusion seems to be that we should continue to sin as much as possible—because, if you are right, the more we sin, the more opportunities we shall provide for God's grace to increase." By no means! How shall we live in sin, we who have died to sin, we who at our baptism shared symbolically the death of Christ? We were, in this sense, buried with him in order that we might share in his resurrection, rising to a new and better kind of life. Death had no further power over Christ when, once for all, he had risen, and you too must look on yourselves as dead to sin but alive for God's service in Jesus Christ. You are no longer to be the slaves of sin; you are dedicated, soul and body, to fulfil the righteousness of God. You must be liberated from the thrall of sin, you whose relationship with God is now one of grace, not of the Law.

(J.) "Then, if we understand you, as the Law is no longer binding upon us, we are at liberty to sin freely?" Far from it! You know that you are the slaves of whatever master you obey, whether you obey sin—a service which leads to death—or obey righteousness. You were formerly the slaves of sin, but now, thank God, you have left that bondage and entered the service of righteousness

—I am using this human analogy because it is of the kind that you are able to understand—and, I repeat, as once with all your strength you served sin, so now equally with body and soul serve righteousness. You were, so to speak, liberated from righteousness when you served sin—but what reward did you gain by doing those things of which now you are ashamed? The end of them is death! But now that you have been freed from sin, and passed into God's service, you have gained increasing holiness, and, at the end, eternal life. For the hard-earned wage of sin is death, but the free gift of God eternal life, through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(7) Let me add another illustration. You know that the Law is binding on a man only during his lifetime. Thus a woman becomes an adulteress if she marries another during the lifetime of her husband, but she is free from that law and at liberty to marry again when her husband has died. This suggests your position, my brothers. Formerly you were wedded, as it were, to the Law, but through Christ's redemption the Law died, so that now you are free to be wedded to the risen Christ. Once, living mere earthly lives, you were controlled by passions which would lead to death. Now we are freed from the Law, dead to that which once kept us in bondage, so that we can serve in the new way of the Spirit, not in the old way of the written Law.

(J.) "You spoke earlier of being in bondage to sin; you speak now of being in bondage to the Law. Do you mean to imply that the Law is identical with sin?" Far from it! But it was through the Law that I came to experience the power of sin. I should not have felt the lure of covetousness, for instance, had not the Law commanded "thou shalt not covet". The existence of the commandment awoke wrong desires in me; in this way the Law made sin active within me, and brought me to spiritual death. This was not the fault of the Law, which

is holy and good ; it was due to sin, turning a good thing to bad use.

For the Law, as we know, is spiritual, but I am earthly, of the flesh, the slave of sin. I fail to do what I want ; I do what I hate doing. Yet, even as I do it, I admit the rightness of the Law. In effect, then, it is not my real self which does it, but the sin which dominates me ! Such is my experience of the Law ; I want to do right, but can only do wrong ; at heart, I delight in the Law of God, but my body, controlled by sin, forces me to obey a lower law. A pitiable creature indeed ! Who will save me from this lower, earthly nature which leads me to death ? Thank God, there is deliverance through Jesus Christ our Lord.

(8) So there is no condemnation for those united with Christ, for through this union the law of the Holy Spirit has released you from the law of sin and death. What the Law, weakened by our lower nature, could not effect, God did by sending his Son, with a nature like ours, to atone for sin. The claims of sin were defeated by him, and the claims of the Law are satisfied by us when we are controlled not by our lower nature but by the Spirit. To be under the control of our lower nature means death ; to be under the control of God's Spirit means life and peace. You cannot belong to Christ if you lack Christ's Spirit, but, if you possess it, the Spirit of God who raised Jesus from the dead will give life to your mortal bodies also.

Therefore, my brothers, our duty is to obey not the lower impulses of our earthly nature but the Spirit of God. All who take that Spirit for their guide are God's children. Your own spirit is not that of a slave but of a son, so that instinctively you address God as " Father ". The Holy Spirit unites with our own spirit in bearing witness to this truth that we are God's children. And so we become, as it were, joint-heirs with Christ, sharing his suffering that afterwards we may share his glory.

Sufferings in this life indeed there are, yet not to be

mentioned in comparison with the future glory ! Even the natural world around us is waiting eagerly for the day when men will be fully revealed as God's children. For nature too was made imperfect, yet not without the hope that some day it would be liberated from bondage and decay, to share the glory of freedom that will come to the children of God. At present, we know, all nature is full of groanings and pains, and even we, though we have received something of the Spirit, still groan, and look eagerly for the full redemption of our bodies that will come when we are completely God's children. For this, as I say, we hope ; and it is not for what we already see that we hope. Yet wait for it with patience.

Meanwhile the Spirit helps our weakness, and prays for us better than we can pray for ourselves. We know that the sum of all things works for the good of those who love God, those whom he called according to his eternal purpose. He called them, that they might share the likeness of his Son, becoming the earliest of his many brethren. Such, then, God calls, justifies and glorifies.

What, then, can we conclude from all this ? If God is on our side, who can be against us ? Will he not freely give us all things, the God who spared not his own Son, but gave him to die for us all ? Who can accuse God's people when God acquits them ? Will Christ condemn them, the Christ who died—and more, who rose again—who is at God's right hand, who intercedes for us ? What can separate us from his love ? Tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or the sword ? (As the Psalmist wrote, " For thy sake we are killed all the day long : we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter ".) No : even in these things we win an exceeding victory, through him who loved us. For sure I am that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor forces of the height nor depth nor any other created thing shall be

able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Here the main doctrinal part of the letter ends. The practical directions which begin with chapter xii, "On these grounds, my brothers, I beseech you . . .," would follow quite naturally upon it. Chapters ix-xi form a separate discourse, complete in itself. They deal with a special historical problem. "God chose Israel as his people and made a solemn covenant with them. The new relationship of man with God through Christ which Paul sets forth seems to annul this covenant; in fact, it may even seem that Israel is excluded from it. How can this rejection of Israel be reconciled with Divine truth and justice?" Such is the problem, and it is one which Paul would often have to handle when speaking to Jewish audiences. Dr. C. H. Dodd has suggested, and the suggestion seems convincing, that Paul had in stock a sermon on this subject which he inserted at this point in his letter. "The epistle could be read without any sense of a gap if these chapters were omitted", yet they are not "a mere interpolation" but "a somewhat earlier piece of work, incorporated here wholesale to save a busy man's time and trouble in writing on the subject afresh"

After emphasizing the deep personal concern which the problem gives him, Paul deals with it as follows :

ix, 6-29.—The rejection does not contradict God's promises or his justice.

ix, 30-x, 21.—The causes of the rejection, and the warnings given to Israel.

xi, 1-24.—Only a part of Israel is rejected, and the

rejection is not final. But let not the Gentiles think themselves secure.

xi, 25-36.—God's plan is mercy to all men at the end.

The arguments addressed to the Jews are, naturally, cast in rabbinic form with various illustrations from the Old Testament. Their present interest and value are consequently far beneath that of the main part of the letter, and the outline of them can be very brief.

(9) I affirm solemnly that this matter of Israel's spiritual future causes me infinite distress. I would sacrifice my own salvation in order that this people, my natural kinsmen, might be saved—they to whom the revelation, the Temple, the promises and privileges of the Old Testament belong, they of the race from which Christ himself in his human birth was descended.

Not that God's word has failed. Not all the natural children of Israel have been chosen as the spiritual children of Israel. Always there has been selection, as when Abraham had two sons but only through Isaac was the promised succession continued. God, of his own choice, will have mercy on one and will harden another, as Exodus records that he hardened the heart of Pharaoh.

To this perhaps you will reply : " If God controls all, he cannot hold man accountable for his actions and blame him, since none can resist the divine will ". To which I answer : " Who are you that question the ways of God ? Can a thing which a man has made say to its maker ' Why did you make me thus ? ' Has not the potter the right to make out of the same lump of clay one vessel for an honourable and another for a humble purpose ? " God's will is absolute, and from people who all have sinned and deserve punishment he forms, in his mercy, his Israel, including—

as Hosea and Isaiah foretold—Gentiles as well as Jews. And the Gentiles attained the righteousness which comes through faith, while Israel hoped, and failed, to obtain righteousness by obedience to the Law.

(10) With all my heart I wish and pray for Israel's salvation. I willingly admit their religious zeal, but it is a zeal ill-informed. They would not accept the Divine ideal of righteousness but replaced it by one of their own. Christ has ended the ideal of righteousness through keeping the Law in order that the true righteousness, that of faith, might be attained by every believer. The Old Testament scriptures confirm this. Spiritually interpreted, they speak of Christ and anticipate his doctrine of faith as that by which man is saved. And you will be saved if you confess with your words that "Jesus is Lord" and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead. For he is Lord of all; there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile, and the same Lord blesses abundantly all who pray to him in faith. To do this it was necessary, I admit, that they should have heard the Gospel, that it should have been brought to them by God's appointed messengers. Yes, but this has been done—only, from the days of the prophets onwards, a large part of Israel refused to listen! Therefore the rejection of Israel cannot be said to imply any injustice on the part of God: the fault lies with Israel itself. As God said long ago through Isaiah, "continually I have stretched out my hand to a people who disobey and contradict".

(11) Must I then, myself an Israelite, conclude that God has finally rejected all his chosen race? By no means! First, when Israel seems to disbelieve, always there is a faithful remnant. You remember the Elijah story and the seven thousand who had not bowed the knee to Baal? So it is still; there is still a remnant which, through God's grace, has believed and is accepted. The others are, as it were, sunk in sleep. But a second fact must be remembered.

Out of this evil God has brought good, because it was only when Israel had rejected it that the Gospel was carried to the Gentiles. If, then, the Gentiles have gained through the falling-away of Israel, how far greater their gain may be when at last Israel is restored !

At this point I address myself to you Gentiles—I who rejoice to be the Apostle of the Gentiles. Remember what you owe to Israel, and take warning from their example. You are like branches of a wild olive tree, grafted into a true olive, so that now you are part of it and share its root. If some of the branches of the cultivated olive were broken off in order that you might be grafted in, do not imagine that God will spare you, if you in turn prove fruitless. Beware then of pride and self-satisfaction. Finally, be sure that the spiritual torpor now afflicting Israel is only temporary ; it will end when the Gentiles have been gathered in, and then all Israel will be saved. God is never false to his promise. In the past you were disobedient, and now—as the result of their disobedience and the transferring of the Gospel message to you—have obtained mercy. They will obtain mercy in their turn ; God has permitted all alike to be disobedient in order that all alike may obtain mercy. How infinite is his wisdom, how inscrutable are his methods ! All comes from, lives by, ends in him. To him be the glory for ever.

With this ends the discourse on the seeming rejection of the Jews (chapters ix-xi) inserted by Paul into his letter. Now he returns to his general message to the Christian community at Rome. It will not be enough if they merely assent to the doctrinal teaching he has given in the first eight chapters. Any real acceptance of it, he is anxious to insist, must be shown by its profound influence upon their daily life—personal and social, religious and secular. Chapters xii-xv accordingly are de-

voted to the practical applications of his doctrinal teaching.

(12) Therefore, my brothers, I beseech you—as the necessary sequel to the doctrine I have set forth, and by those mercies of God on which you count, I beseech you—offer yourselves and your bodies, as a rational act of worship, to the service of God. Do not follow this world's fashions ; fashion yourselves anew that you may understand and do the will of God.

Beware of conceit. Our human bodies include many parts and each part has a different use ; so we together form one body in Christ, and as parts of it are related one with another. We have been given different powers ; let each use his own well, whether as a preacher, a helper of others, a teacher, a speaker, a contributor, an office-holder, or one who brings succour to the afflicted. Let your love be genuine ; abhor evil, cleave to the good. Be ready to honour others, be industrious, enthusiastic, serving the Lord. Rejoice in the hope you have. Stand fast under persecution. Persevere in prayer. Help necessitous members of the church, show yourselves hospitable. Bless instead of cursing those who attack you. Rejoice with the rejoicing, weep with the weepers. Agree among yourselves. Shun ambition and be content to mix with humble folk. Do not overrate yourselves or return evil for evil. Act so that all will have to recognize your honesty. So far as you can, be at peace with everyone. Never try to exact vengeance ; leave vengeance to God, as the scriptures advise. And—again as they advise—show kindness to your enemy ; in this way you will, as it were, make him burn with shame. Never be mastered by evil ; master evil by doing good.

(13) Now concerning your relations with the civil powers. Be ready to obey them, for all authority comes ultimately from God, and to resist authority is to resist

God's order. You have no cause to fear the magistrates unless you are a wrong-doer ; if you are, they will punish you, as God has appointed. But they will be ready to praise you and their rule will benefit you, again as God has appointed, if your life is upright. You must obey the authorities, therefore, not only to avoid God's punishment but to satisfy your conscience. From the same motive you must pay your taxes. Indeed, you should render to everyone his due—whether tribute, taxes, reverence or honour. Owe no debts except that of love ; to love is to keep the Law, and all commandments beyond the Ten are summed up in the saying " thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself ". I urge this because the day of judgment and salvation is near, nearer than when first you accepted the faith. Bestir yourselves from sleep, renounce the deeds of darkness, put on the armour of light. Live as those in the daylight should, not in debauchery, licentiousness, quarrellings. Make Christ your pattern, and do not be ruled by your lower nature.

(14) What should be the Christian's attitude towards the over-scrupulous—the vegetarians and the sabbatarians, for example ? Receive them with all friendliness, not with argument and criticism. A strong-minded man eats any food, the scrupulous will eat nothing but vegetables. Well, neither should despise the other ; both are servants of God, and to God judgment should be left. Again, one man makes much of special feasts and fasts ; another treats all days alike. Each man must be guided by his conscience in all such matters ; then, whether he eats or abstains, he does so to the Lord ; whether he observes or disregards special days, he does so to the Lord. This is the important principle, that in this world and beyond it all of us are Christ's ; all will have to stand before the judgment-seat of God, and it is not for us to criticize one another.

Rather, resolve that you will never put an obstacle in a brother's way. Christ has taught me that nothing is defiling

in itself, yet if a man sincerely believes it to be defiling, then to him defiling it is. You transgress the law of love if by eating flesh you grieve your neighbour—one for whom Christ was willing to die ! Do not insist on your rights ; it is not trifles of this kind which are essential for the Kingdom of God, but righteousness, peace and the joy which God's Spirit gives. Place concord before disputes, building-up before destructive criticism. No form of food or drink is really forbidden, yet it is better to abstain from flesh and wine than to give offence. Your belief about your full liberty is sound, yet keep it to yourself. But he who has qualms of conscience condemns himself if he eats what he supposes to be forbidden ; he contradicts his real belief, and to do this is sin. (15) If we are strong ourselves, we should be the readier to make allowances for the weak, and to consider our neighbour rather than ourselves. Remember the example of Christ, whose sufferings for others were foretold by the scriptures. God grant to you all the joy and peace that faith gives, and the rich hope that the Spirit bestows !

I have every confidence in you, but the commission I hold as the apostle of the Gentiles has emboldened me to write to you with frankness. I have a right to be proud of what I have accomplished through God's power ; I will not dwell on what others have done—only on my own experience and success among the Gentiles, with many outward signs, through the might of God's Spirit. Throughout my travels my rule has been to go only where the Gospel had not already been preached, lest I should seem merely to be building where the difficult work of laying the foundations had been done by others.

Hitherto my work elsewhere has hindered me from coming to you, as I have wished for many years to do, but now that my task here is finished I hope to stay with you for a time on my way to Spain. First, however, I must take to Jerusalem the money which the people of Achaia

and Macedonia have gladly collected for the impoverished Christians of that city. They have done well to give it, because the Gentiles, having shared the spiritual blessings of the Jews, should be ready to share with the Jews their material possessions. As soon, then, as I have completed this and seen to the due distribution of the gift, I shall start for Spain and visit you on the way. To you, I feel sure, I shall bring the rich blessing of Christ through his gospel.

Meanwhile, I beseech you to pray for me. Pray that I may escape my enemies in Judaea, that the gift which I carry to Jerusalem may prove welcome, and that, with God's help, I may be able to come to you in good spirits and have some time of rest while I am with you. May God, the giver of peace, be with you all. Amen.

Here in all probability, as we have already seen, the letter to the Roman Christians ends. What follows as chapter xvi is a quite separate note of commendation given to Phoebe when she was setting out on a journey, perhaps to Ephesus. The heads of the church at her destination are told to welcome her. Almost all the rest of the chapter is taken up with the names of friends to whom Paul wishes to be remembered. It is obviously needless to reproduce all those names in this summary.

(16) I commend to you our sister Phoebe, a deaconess of Cenchreae. Extend a warm welcome to her and give her whatever help she needs—for she has helped many people, including myself.

Remember me to the friends whose names follow. . . . All the churches of Christ greet you.

Beware of those who stir up controversies among you, and keep away from them ; too easily they beguile simple folk. But your loyalty makes me rejoice, and I want you

to be well versed in all that is good and ignorant of evil alone. It will not be long before God crushes Satan under your feet. May the grace of Christ be with you.

All with me here send greetings. (And so do I, Tertius, the secretary who am writing this letter.)

Now to him who is able to strengthen you by my gospel, which preaches Jesus Christ—according to the Divine purpose, long hidden, but now revealed, and made known, as was prophesied, to all nations, making them obedient to the faith—to him, the God of all wisdom, be ascribed, through Jesus Christ, all glory for ever. Amen.

NOTES

i, 20. This verse contains the first of two most striking references to the place of the natural world in the cosmic scheme. Both are found in this letter—the second occurs in viii, 20-22—and neither has any parallel in Paul's other writings. The second, indeed, is unique in the whole Bible. The thought of i, 20 is shared to some extent by other Biblical writers, as by the author of the 19th psalm. But here Paul uses it, almost incidentally, with remarkable effect. He is countering the supposed argument that those sunk in pagan wickedness cannot justly be blamed, because they do not so much as know of God's existence. On the contrary, Paul replies, it should be plain to them, for (to quote Moffatt's translation) "God himself has made it plain—for ever since the world was created, his invisible nature, his everlasting power and divine being, have been perceptible in what he has made". Man is rightly condemned, Paul holds, if he has ignored the witness of nature to God, and has not derived a natural religion, however primitive, from it. The creation

has given this witness, he writes, "from the beginning"—perhaps with the memory of the first sentence of Genesis in his mind. In viii, 19 and the following verses he turns his thoughts towards the end. The world of nature, he suggests, has suffered by man's sin; ultimately it will share in man's redemption. For this all creation waits "with eager longing", though (as the *Twentieth Century New Testament* renders the passage) "not without the hope that some day Nature also will be set free from enslavement to decay, and will attain to the freedom which will mark the glory of the children of God". As yet "the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain", yet the pains themselves are a promise, being the pains of travail, the birth-pangs of a new world designed for a glorified humanity. Behind all else he discerns a slow cosmic process, to end with a splendid triumph in which both man and Nature will share. It is a bold and majestic conception, worthy of the great chapter in which it appears.

vi, 16-20; vii, 1-4. In these passages Paul tries to illustrate his teaching about man's transference from sin to newness of life by two analogies, one drawn from the law of slave-ownership, the other from the law of marriage. The reader who tries to follow their argument closely may well be perplexed by them, and it seems fair to tell him frankly that neither will stand logical examination. When Paul, dictating a letter, attempts to illustrate his meaning by some elaborate analogy or metaphor, he is apt to get rather hopelessly entangled before the end. In his "law of marriage" analogy, for instance, his argument is this: a woman is an adulteress if she takes another partner during her husband's lifetime.

But the death of her husband releases her from that law, and she is now free without blame to marry another. In the same kind of way, the argument continues, you, having died to the Law, are now free to enter into a new union with Christ—an obvious confusion, because it is the surviving partner of a marriage who can marry again, not the partner who has died! The reader will be wise not to concern himself too much if he finds the detailed reasoning in this and similar passages obscure. He may well content himself with noticing the main principle—sound, clear and important—which Paul is anxious to establish.

viii, 20. “ We know that all things work together for good to them that love God ” is a sentence which seems often to be misunderstood. It is interpreted as meaning “ The Christian can be sure that everything which happens to him is for his good, and his faith should enable him to believe that even his greatest misfortunes are really ‘ blessings in disguise ’ ”. Yet to a man whose young daughter, let us say, has suddenly been stricken with cancer, language of this kind seems quite monstrous. And in fact Paul says nothing of the kind. No-one had better cause to know or acknowledged more frankly how much life holds of pain and distress, of suffering both bodily and mental. Even the world of nature in his view, as we have seen, “ groaneth and travaileth in pain ”. Yet he does not, like many pessimistic writers, ignore the other side of the account; he remembers life’s happiness, its love, friendships, successes, pleasures and, above all, the spiritual joys that come to those in touch with God. And so he finds that the balance is on the side of good. He

does not, and could not, affirm that "each thing works for good" to the Christian; what he does say is that "all things together" do so; taking the cosmic process as a whole, weighing its good against its evil.

ix, 20. The reader may well feel that the problem of moral evil is not lightened by such a sentence as "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth". The reply which Paul anticipates in the next verse, "Thou wilt then say unto me, 'why doth he yet find fault?'", seems final. Paul can only meet it by urging that this implies a criticism of the Creator by one whom he has created. To appreciate his attitude, it is necessary to remember with what difficulty and at what cost Israel had preserved its strict monotheism against foreign influence, and how worth while the effort had proved. Therefore the predominant school of Jewish religious thought had an intense dread of dualism—the theory admitting the existence of two independent powers of good and evil—as tending to weaken belief in the absolute supremacy of the one God. This led to the logical need of ascribing all things, evil as well as good, ultimately to him, and, as a consequence of this, to the doctrine of determinism, minimizing human free-will. Yet the difficulty this involved was often felt by Old Testament writers. It is interesting to contrast, for example, two accounts of the same event provided by 2 Sam. xxiv, 1 and 1 Chron. xxi, 1. The former states that "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Israel, and *he* moved David against them to say: Go, number Israel", while the latter declares "*Satan* stood up against Israel, and provoked David to

number Israel ". Yet what wiser conclusion of the whole matter can the human intellect reach than that which Paul supplies at the end of chapter ix : " O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out ! " ?

xi, 17, etc. Paul evidently supposed the process of grafting to mean that a gardener could take a branch from a wild olive tree, insert it into a cultivated olive tree, and that then the inserted branch would bear cultivated olives. But he was essentially a townsman, no lover and close observer of the countryside as was our Lord.

xii ; xiii. It is interesting to see how strongly Paul, himself proud of his Roman citizenship, upholds the authority of the Roman government and urges obedience to it as a Christian duty. But at this date the Roman government was not hostile to the church, and the Christian could still without difficulty render his dues both to God and to Caesar. It was the development of the cult of emperor-worship which in later years brought about a lamentable change.

xiv. How large-minded and superbly unselfish is Paul's attitude towards two sets of people whom, quite plainly, he thought troublesome faddists—the vegetarians and the sabbatarians in Rome ! They are in his view " weaker brethren ", and he does not conceal his certainty that their beliefs are ill-founded. Yet if the " weak ", they are also " brethren ", fellow-members with the stronger in one church. Better therefore, he urges, to suffer any inconvenience, to submit to any restriction, than to cause them unnecessary offence. The points they hold important

seem to him trivial, but the Christian law of charity is far from trivial. Not many months after writing this letter, he himself acted on the principle he laid down. When he had reached Jerusalem, that centre of the Jewish-rigorist party in the church, James and the elders explained that there was much disquiet over reports that Paul belittled the Law. To refute these stories, they urged that he should join four men under a Nazarite vow and take part with them in the appropriate Temple ceremonies, "that all may know that those things, whereof they were informed concerning thee, are nothing, but that thou thyself also walkest orderly, and keepest the Law". Some of Paul's biographers (such as, for instance, Weinel, *St. Paul: The Man and his Work*, p. 235) regard his compliance as "tragic", and prefer to assume that the account of it in Acts must be untrue. On the contrary, it is in the highest degree creditable to Paul. These Nazarite vows and ceremonies, though they now seemed to him unimportant, were innocuous enough. To comply with the request would not violate any principle; on the other hand, it would gratify the Jerusalem brethren. He could no longer attach great value to ceremonial details, but he could, at the cost of doing something rather distasteful and inconvenient, avoid causing pain to fellow-Christians. In this way he carried out himself the rule he had given in his letter to the Romans.

II. THE CAPTIVITY LETTERS

EPHESIANS

BETWEEN the writing of Romans and of the group of letters made up of Ephesians, Colossians and Philemon—Philippians probably followed a little later—there was an interval of some four years. The Roman letter had been written at Corinth, in or about A.D. 57. It explains, as we have seen, that Paul's next journey must be to Jerusalem, in order to convey and to distribute the money collected for its impoverished church. He wished to reach Jerusalem in time to keep the feast of Pentecost. His first idea was to travel by a pilgrim ship conveying fellow-countrymen of his, also on their way to Jerusalem for Pentecost. They included fanatics who thought that the voyage would supply an opportunity for killing Paul. Someone discovered the plot in time to prevent him from embarking, and he made the journey by another route. He crossed from Philippi to Troas, sailed southwards, calling at various islands and ports on the mainland, reached Syria, disembarking at Ptolemais, and thence journeying by Caesarea to Jerusalem. Here his Jewish enemies brought about his arrest, and, unsatisfied by this, planned to assassinate him. He was moved to Caesarea, and left in prison there for two years. When at length brought to trial before Festus, he exercised his right of appeal, as a Roman citizen, to

have his case heard at Rome in Caesar's court. Every reader will recollect the story of his voyage as a prisoner to Rome and of the shipwreck at Malta. In Rome, pending his trial, he was allowed to remain under detention in a house he had hired. Here he stayed for at least two years, and here, if we are content to believe a tradition unquestioned through eighteen centuries, the four "captivity" Epistles were written.

That Ephesians, Colossians, Philemon and Philip-pians were written by Paul when he was a prisoner is certain, because in each of the letters he mentions this fact. But in modern times two rival conjectures have suggested that they were written, not in Rome, but during the imprisonment at Caesarea or during the persecution and (probable) imprisonment at Ephesus. The Ephesus theory is rather more plausible than the other, but the case that can be made out for it is far from convincing, and the majority of scholars agree that there is no cause to abandon the ancient and satisfying belief that these letters were written in Rome. However that may be, the question is for the general reader of very small importance; the value of the letters is the same in whatever place they were penned.

But the reader may be more concerned by the question whether Ephesians is the work of Paul or, as some modern critics argue, of some later and unidentified author. Patristic writers from the second century onward attributed the Epistle to Paul without hesitation, and no other theory was known until recent times. The chief grounds on which the Pauline authorship is now doubted are the frequent resemblance of Ephesians to Colossians, its differ-

ences in thought from the earlier Epistles, and its teaching about the church, which belongs, it is suggested, to a period later than Paul's lifetime. Yet is it improbable that a man writing two letters almost at the same time to two different sets of people should repeat some of his points? And, as there was an interval of some four years between the "missionary" and the "captivity" letters, should we expect nothing new in his ideas at the end of this period, no sign of spiritual and intellectual progress? It should be noted that what is new in the later Epistles is a development from his earlier teaching, but never inconsistent with it. Again, the interval would be long enough for fresh organization and new problems to appear in the vigorous young churches, and no real proof can be adduced to show that any sentence in any of the captivity letters must be assigned to a period later than Paul's.

A question of authorship, however, is not to be decided only by technical details of this type. At least as important is the judgment of readers with a "feeling" for literature, who are sensitive to nuances of style, whose trained perception enables them to distinguish between an original work of genius and a cleverly contrived imitation. Not every specialist in New Testament criticism, it may be suggested, is a man of letters in the sense of possessing this equipment. Those who have it will not easily resign the traditional belief in the Pauline authorship of Ephesians. Unlike the Pastoral Epistles, this work does not read like one slowly and carefully fabricated to resemble Paul's writings. The style throughout is spontaneous, it glows with fervour, it mounts easily to great heights of thought. It is, in short, a work

of spiritual genius. If Paul is not its author, it is the work of some unknown person who not merely borrowed his style and reproduced his characteristics, but in so doing equalled him at his best.

This question is not one which the general reader can disregard, because if Ephesians is no more than an anonymous imitation of Paul's writings, it loses much both of interest and authority. Of another problem presented by this Epistle little need be said. To what church was it addressed? Almost the only answer which can be given with confidence is that it was not the Ephesian church. Paul had lived for some two years in Ephesus; several sentences of this letter imply that those who will read it have no personal acquaintance with him. In Ephesus Paul had many friends and fellow-workers; a letter to the church there would have ended with his customary messages of greeting to those friends. There are no such greetings at the close of this letter. Even more significant is the fact that—as is duly noted in the margin of our Revised Version—the words “at Ephesus” in the first sentence of the letter are missing from a number of the oldest manuscripts, including the *Codex Sinaiticus*. They seem to have been inserted later, through a misunderstanding.

But when it has been decided, reasonably enough, that “Ephesians” was not intended for the church of Ephesus, to name its real destination is far more difficult. Many theories have been put forward. That most widely accepted holds that this was a circular letter, intended to be passed round among a number of neighbouring churches. It is pointed out that once at least Paul gave definite instructions that a letter written to one church should, after it had been

read, be forwarded to another (Colossians iv, 16). Yet some at least of the counsels and warnings contained in this letter seem to be addressed to an individual church rather than to a group. Another theory suggests that "Ephesians" was really a letter to the church of Laodicea. But the general reader may wisely leave these profitless discussions to the experts. The most that can be said of such speculations is that some seem rather less improbable than others. Unless the sands of Egypt yield up some new and startling discovery, no definite conclusion can be reached. And the whole question is really unimportant. Whether or no this is a genuine letter from Paul or a mere imitation affects its value considerably. To what church, or group of churches, it was addressed does not affect its value at all.

Whoever were its first readers, the purpose of the letter—which, as a matter of convenience, may still be called Ephesians—is clear enough. Paul has now reached a stage at which he is intensely concerned about the future of Christianity. In the earliest letters of his which we possess he did not think it necessary to look far ahead, because then he supposed the return of Christ to be imminent. (This belief was plainly shown, as we have seen, in the Thessalonian letters.) Now he has ceased to expect this, and therefore it seems important to provide, so far as he can, for the years to come. The need is increased by the fact that he is a prisoner whose trial may result in a death sentence. No longer can he visit the churches; he must employ his letters to strengthen them in preparation for the day when he will no longer be in this world to give them counsel. The local churches had increased greatly both in number

and size, but this growth had brought with it new problems. In particular, as the proportion of Gentile converts increased, where at first all the church members were of Jewish origin, signs of friction between Jewish and Gentile Christians became too common. Again, in earlier days each local church had seemed to itself, and perhaps to its founder also, a self-contained entity, having little relationship with other local churches in other countries. But by this time Paul himself has definitely risen to the conception that the local churches are but parts of the one church which is the mystic Body of Christ and continues his work, guided by the Spirit in fulfilment of his promise, and finding in the sacrament of his body and blood not merely a sign of their members' fellowship or a memorial of their Master, but also the means of mystical union with him.

Even in his youthful days at Tarsus, as was remarked in the first chapter of this book, Paul probably had known something of the pagan mystery cults. In the later part of his missionary work, and now again in Rome, he pondered their significance. Indeed, he was compelled to do so, because at this time they were growing in numbers and influence. While much of their teaching seemed false and highly mischievous, there were also parts of it which appealed strongly to him, being himself strongly drawn to mysticism by his own temperament. But in the conception of the church which had now formed he found an answer to what else had been a difficult problem. Whatever in the mystery cults seemed good and true was supplied, Paul believed, by the church, in his new and more profound interpretation

of that term. And the church would be the means through which the great "hidden purpose" of God, a glimpse of which was now possible, would be ultimately achieved—the union of all things and all men with God in Christ.

As a first step, therefore, the church must gain unity within itself. Differences of opinion, no doubt, must remain, yet there must be a common faith and purpose, and a dominating spirit of charity. This must penetrate into the details of everyday life—into the relations, for example, of husband and wife, of father and children, of master and slave. Therefore the purpose of this letter can be defined in one word as unity. The people whom Paul addressed must understand that they were members not merely of local churches but of the one church of Christ, and then they must carry out in every part of their daily life what this membership and its ideal of unity demanded.

The six chapters into which the letter is now divided fall into two equal parts. The first three give their teaching in the form of a religious meditation, of prayer and thanksgiving. They have no formal structure. In them Paul is thinking aloud. One may suppose that he had planned to begin his letter with a short introduction of this kind, but one thought followed another, a third succeeded that, and so the sentences wandered on, as Paul became absorbed by his theme, pondering the Divine scheme and the greatness of all that Christ had brought about. He finds it difficult to stop, impossible to compress such reflections into a succinct and orderly form! The reader of our English translation will notice that the whole of the first chapter, after the

opening two verses of greeting, consists of two immense straggling sentences, each containing about two hundred and fifty words. With our English punctuation, there are only three full stops in the entire chapter.

This part of the letter ends, at the close of the third chapter, with a glorious doxology. Then the second part begins, like the second part of Romans, with "I beseech you therefore", and detailed rules follow, enforcing Christian virtues in general with that of unity as members of the church in particular.

The following is an outline of the letter :

(1) Paul the Apostle sends his wishes for God's peace and benediction to the faithful in Christ.

Thanks be to God who through Christ has given us every spiritual blessing ! Even before the creation he destined us to become his children through Jesus Christ, thereby showing the grace bestowed through him who redeemed us and won forgiveness of our sins. Rich were God's gifts to us of wisdom and understanding, enabling us to understand his secret purpose of uniting ultimately all things, both of heaven and earth, in Christ. And we too have been given our share in Christ, for this was part of the accomplishment of the Divine plan ; indeed, we have been the first to put our trust in him. And after believing in him you received the Spirit, as he had promised—a foretaste of the full redemption which is to come, increasing the Divine glory.

So ever since I heard of your faith I have not ceased to give thanks for it when I mention you in my prayers. And I pray that God may increase your wisdom and insight, enabling you to understand the richness of your heritage as Christ's people, and the greatness of the power with which he assists believers. The same power it was which raised Christ from the dead and set him high

above all the ranks of angels, all things on earth, all things present or to come. And God has made him the Head of the church—the church which is his Body, and is perfected by him whose own completeness completes all things.

(2) He has given life to you who once were dead through sin, following the ways of this world, obeying the prince of evil spirits—the prince who still controls the disobedient. Among them formerly I was numbered as well as you, when we were self-willed and slaves of our lower nature. Yet God, in his great compassion and love, gave life to us, dead though we were, when he gave life to Christ. Then, with the risen Christ, he raised us, giving us a place in heaven with him, that all future ages might recognize the inexhaustible wealth of his loving-kindness. For this it is which has saved you; if through your faith, yet it is not due to yourselves, the gift is God's. What we are is what God has made us, through our union with Christ, that we might spend our lives, as he ordained, in doing good.

In bygone days, remember, you were—as human descent is reckoned—Gentiles, despised as “the uncircumcised” by those whom a human rite had circumcised. Then you were far from Christ, aliens to Israel and without share in its promises, without a hope in the world, and without God. But now, through the unity which Christ has brought about, you who were remote are near. He has made the peace uniting Jew and Gentile, and breaking down the barrier between them. By his Incarnation he has abolished the supremacy of the Law and its ordinances, uniting both Jew and Gentile in one church through the Cross, so that now we all alike have access to the Father in one Spirit. So you are no longer strangers and aliens; you belong to the community of God's people, you are members of his household. You are a building based upon the apostles and prophets, with Jesus Christ as its

corner-stone. In him all the building is bonded together, and rises as a temple in which God will dwell.

(3) I, Paul, whom Jesus has allowed to be in prison for the sake of you Gentiles—for you know, of course, if you recollect what I have already written to you in a few sentences, how God has made me a minister to the Gentiles and has revealed to me and my fellow-workers the truth, hidden from bygone generations, that Gentiles should share equally with Jews in the Divine promises. Such is the Gospel which I, less than the least of God's people though I am, was chosen to preach. Yes, I preach to the Gentiles the limitless riches of Christ, and proclaim to all the world a truth always planned by God but hitherto concealed, the secret of our unity. From the church here this truth will reach to the very angels of heaven, that all may know the fulfilment of the Divine purpose in Christ Jesus, who has opened to us all the road by which we may approach confidently to God. You must not be disheartened by the sufferings I now endure for your sakes ; rather, be proud that they are being endured for you.

So I kneel in prayer to our Father in heaven—himself the source of all “fatherhood” in heaven and earth alike. I pray him to strengthen your inmost life by his Spirit, so that your faith may enable the Christ to find a home in your hearts. And I pray that you, with your own lives based firmly upon love, may come to know the width, length, height, depth, and to understand—though indeed it is beyond understanding!—the love of Christ, and be filled with the richness of God. To him who can do more than we can ask or imagine be all glory through the church and Christ Jesus for ever ! Amen.

(4) So then, in prison here for the Lord's sake, I entreat you to live worthily of the Divine call you have received, at peace among yourselves and eager to maintain that unity which the Spirit gives. One church there is, one Spirit, one hope which now you share ; one Lord, creed and

baptism, one supreme and universal God. Each, it is true, has received some individual and special gift from Christ—the Christ who, as a psalm shows, both descended into the realm of the dead and ascended into heaven—and these gifts of his have brought us apostles, prophets, teachers, workers of many kinds ; but all to help in the building up of the one church which is Christ's Body. So we shall continue, in growing unity, till we attain to the full standard of Christian perfection. Thus we shall no more be like children, easily duped and blown about by every shift of opinion ; we shall hold fast to the truth, yet in love. And in love the Body will grow, each part contributing to the life of the whole, and all united with the Head, which is Christ.

In the Lord's name I charge you, live no longer like the pagan Gentiles, who are alienated from God, blind, given over to sensuality. Very different is the teaching you have received from Christ, if you listened to the truth as he teaches it ! You learnt that you must abandon that old corrupt nature, depraved by sinful passions, and, with a new mind, put on a new nature, formed after God's pattern in righteousness and holiness. Because we are members of the same Body, everyone must speak the truth to his neighbour: Be angry, yet do not sin ; end your anger before sunset ; do not give the devil the chance he seeks. Let the thief become honest, working for his pay, and having earned it he will be able to help the needy. Let your talk be clean, of a kind to profit those who hear it. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit who has marked you as God's, and would keep you closed to evil influences until the day when your redemption is complete. Put away all anger and bitterness ; be ready to forgive one another, as God, through Christ, has forgiven you.

(5) Being God's children, keep his pattern before you ; imitate Christ, who died for you. As for sexual vice and indecency, do not even mention them in your talk—rather

let a note of thanksgiving to God be heard in it. For of this you can be sure, that no sensualist given over to gross sin—whose desires rank him with the idolaters—can have any place in God's kingdom. No plausible argument must lead you astray on this point ; these are the sins which incur God's anger, and you must shun the company of those who commit them. For you are the children of light now, no longer of darkness, children of a light that shines in every good deed. Your aim must be to do the Lord's will. Have no part with those who work deeds of darkness ; rather, bring them to the light and expose them ! Their secret vices cannot even be mentioned without a sense of shame. But the light reveals their character ; as one of our poets has said :

“ O sleeper, wake, arouse thee !
Come forth from death's dominion,
And Christ himself shall light thee ! ”

Take care, then, to live wisely, missing no opportunity for doing good in these evil times. People should hear you singing psalms and hymns when you are in high spirits ; not the songs that come from drunken revellers ! With words and music raise hearty thanksgivings to God.

There should be due subordination among you. For instance, wives should obey their husbands, for the husband is, as it were, the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. And husbands should love their wives, as Christ loved the church, his spotless bride. When I speak of this symbol, I touch on a profound mystery. But the practical point is that a Christian husband should love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife should respect her husband.

(6) Children, obey your parents, remembering the Fifth Commandment. Fathers, do not irritate your children ; see that the training and teaching you give them are Christian.

Slaves, obey your masters, dreading their displeasure, and willingly, as though serving the Lord rather than men, remembering that by him every good deed will be rewarded, whether the doer be master or slave. Masters, act in the same way to your slaves and do not give your orders with threats. Remember that you and they have one Master in heaven who knows no distinctions of rank.

To sum up, then. Be strong in the Lord and rely on his might. Put on all the armour of God that you may be able to withstand the devil's cunning. For it is not against human enemies that we have to fight, but against those spirit-powers of evil who rule in the darkness of this world, who even rage against the highest. Don all your armour, therefore, that in the day of trial you may be able to resist the assault and be found still standing fast at the battle's end. Stand fast, then—with truth your girdle, righteousness your breastplate, the gospel of peace your sure foothold. Let the shield of faith protect every part against the flaming darts of evil. Take the helmet of salvation, and the Spirit—which is to say, the word of God—as your sword. Be diligent in prayer; intercede for all members of the church and for me, that here in prison I may be able to preach the inmost truth of the Gospel; pray that I may be set at liberty, so that I may be able to preach without restraint and fulfil my task.

The faithful and beloved Tychicus will bring you news of me. I am sending him that he may do this and give you courage.

May the Father and our Lord grant peace and trustful love to all the brethren, and grace to every true lover of Jesus Christ our Lord.

NOTES

iii. It looks as though at the beginning of this chapter Paul had meant to pass from the prayers,

thanksgivings and meditations he had poured out to the practical directions which should follow them. But he has hardly begun the first sentence before he breaks it off, and leaves it unfinished. He feels that even now he must dwell further on the magnificence of the Divine scheme of a united church, but lately revealed ; there are other prayers he must utter, and this part of his letter must not end without a great outburst of praise. When all this has been written, he can return to the point where he broke off, and chapter iv begins with another version of the unfinished first sentence of chapter iii. (Of course the reader will always remember that there were no divisions into " chapters " or " verses " in the letter as Paul wrote it. The arrangement of the Bible in " chapters " dates from about 1204 ; " verses " did not appear until 1551.)

iii, 10. Paul's belief in supernatural beings, angels and spirits both good and bad, had a large place in his religion. It had been encouraged and developed by the apocalyptic literature current in his time. In the heavenly hierarchy, besides archangels and angels, he includes principalities, powers, virtues (or " might "), dominions and thrones (cf. i, 21 and Col. i, 16). These seven, with the addition of seraphim and cherubim, became generally recognized in the early church—probably in the fifth or sixth century—as " the nine orders of angels ", and representations of the nine orders are frequent in English painted glass of the fifteenth century. Here he is suggesting that the mystery now disclosed to the church, God's ultimate purpose of uniting all in Christ, will be heard as the church proclaims it even by the far-off hosts of heaven.

iv, 26. The meaning of this verse is often misunderstood, because where it occurs as the Epistle of the 19th Sunday after Trinity the Prayer-book, in most modern copies, prints it "Be ye angry and sin not", omitting the comma after "angry", which is rightly inserted in the Bible. Without it, the sentence may be supposed to lay down a double prohibition—against anger, and against sin. But Paul actually says "Be angry"—when there is just cause for anger—"but do not let your anger lead you into sin". This it may easily do if you foment it by brooding over the wrong, embittering your heart. Make the day's anger end with the day: "let not the sun go down upon your wrath". But no-one knew better than Paul that there is such a thing as righteous anger.

v, 14. The quotation is of great interest because, though its exact source is unknown, evidently it comes from a very early Christian hymn—one of those hymns which Paul recommends for use in verse 19. The rendering given above attempts to reproduce the cadence of the Greek lines.

vi, 12. Here is the other army of supernatural beings, of whose reality Paul is convinced—the army of evil, striving for the moral ruin of mankind, aiding the devil's work. No-one would insist to-day on belief in the "nine orders" of good angels or the like divisions—"principalities, powers, rulers"—among the forces of evil. Yet who can set aside as incredible the existence of such forces, of unseen helpers and unseen enemies in the spiritual world? Here, it will be noticed, Paul visualizes the presence of beings hostile to God "in high places", which means in the realm of heaven. We are reminded of

that dramatic sentence, "there was war in heaven", from the Johannine apocalypse. "Rage against the highest", though not a precise translation, fits the general meaning of Paul's picture and was suggested by Milton's superb lines :

He spake ; and to confirm his words, outflew
Millions of flaming swords, drawn from the thighs
Of mighty cherubim : the sudden blaze
Far round illumined hell ; highly they raged
Against the highest, and fierce with grasped arms
Clashed on their sounding shields the din of war.

vi, 13, etc. Perhaps the member of the Praetorian guard on duty in Paul the prisoner's chamber smiled as the apostle dictated this description of the Christian's armour ! He little guessed how long the pen-picture, for which he was serving as a model, would endure.

COLOSSIANS

IN the introduction to the outline of Ephesians there was a brief reference to Paul's relations with the pagan mystery cults, something of which he had known from his youthful days, while by this time—the time when Ephesians and Colossians were written—their influence, with that of various “freak” religions more or less allied to them, had become a danger to some of the Christian churches. The danger was to grow far more formidable in the first half of the second century, with the development of “Gnosticism”—*i.e.* of sects claiming a special *gnōsis*, or secret knowledge—both within and without the church. But the beginning of that movement was already alarming Paul. It was the more insidious because its supporters professed to admire rather than to oppose Christianity.

He already had noticed that, in a limited degree, there were points of affinity between Christianity in its sacramental aspect and the mystery cults. The latter, in his view, were dim foreshadowings of the former. But he was clear that the content of Christianity included everything of value in the mystery cults with very much that they lacked, and he was even more positive that the worship of Jesus Christ could not be combined with the worship of angels or other spiritual beings. It was, however, a composite religion of this type that the supporters of

cults offered to Christians, whom in this way they hoped to detach from the church. "If you throw in your lot with us", they urged, "you will still be able to worship your Christ; in fact, we shall be happy to include him among the 'aeons'—spiritual beings—whom we worship. What we propose means the enrichment of your religion by blending with it Oriental theosophy and Greek philosophy." To defend Christianity from becoming a "syncretistic"—or composite—religion of this type was one of the hardest battles which the early church had to fight, and it is difficult to overestimate the value of the lead given by Paul in the first stage of that battle.

Among the earliest Christian communities to be threatened by the danger was that of Colossae, a large and wealthy city not far from Laodicea—to which place, as we have noted, some scholars believe the misnamed "Ephesian" letter to have been addressed. Paul himself had never visited Colossae; the preaching of Epaphras, a native of the place, had brought about the foundation of its church. Soon many of its members were approached by one of the strangest of the syncretistic cults. It seems to have been compounded of pagan philosophy, angel-worship and rigorous Judaism. Like the mystery cults, it professed an inner secret knowledge, and, like them, it upheld various forms of asceticism. But it also placed in the forefront of its creed an exact observance of the Jewish ceremonial Law, with all its rules for circumcision, sabbath-keeping and festivals.

Epaphras, rightly alarmed by this development, carried the news of it to Paul, detained as a prisoner in Rome. The apostle was about to send off his

“ Ephesian ” letter in the charge of Tychicus, and decided that the same messenger should carry also another letter to the Colossian church, and a third, dealing with a personal and private matter, to a friend of his resident in Colossae. What must be the contents of his letter to the Colossian church was clear enough. He must put its members on their guard against the strange heresy, the blend of Judaistic with pagan doctrine which, as he had learned from Epaphras, was now being offered them. He must refute the idea that, so far from being inconsistent with, it might be welcomed as an enrichment of the authentic gospel. He would deal faithfully with its errors, but he could counteract them best by a re-statement of the Christology—the interpretation of the being and redemptive work of Christ—which, in his view, every true disciple must accept. Yet, disquieting as was the news which Epaphras had brought, it included also grounds for thankfulness. If many of the Colossians needed warnings, many of them deserved high praise, and such praise and thanksgiving Paul, as his courteous custom was, would put in the forefront of his letter. Then, after reinforcing sound doctrine and denouncing false, he would end the letter with some advice of a more general kind. The practical counsel he had just written, or was on the point of writing, to the Christians addressed in his Ephesian letter would be equally useful, he felt, to the Christians at Colossae. Such were the occasion, the purposes and the contents of this Epistle.

Although there are in it some most striking and memorable passages, the reader of this letter in the English Bible will probably feel that, as a whole, it

cannot be ranked with the greatest and most spiritually profitable of Paul's writings. Often its doctrinal statements seem involved and obscure, although their difficulty might be lessened if we had a fuller knowledge of the heresies they were designed to refute. The advice about singing psalms and hymns, the rules of conduct to be observed by husbands and wives, parents and children, masters and slaves, are identical in substance and nearly identical in wording with those given in Ephesians. Yet the slight differences are enough to show that here is the same writer saying much the same things to two different sets of people; a mere copyist—to whom some critics have attributed Ephesians—would not have made these variations. The fine passage about putting on the armour of God, contained in this section of Ephesians, has no counterpart in the corresponding section of Colossians. This seems to show that, while undoubtedly the two letters must have been written in rapid succession, Colossians was dictated first and Ephesians afterwards. It is quite conceivable that while he was repeating in Ephesians the practical advice he had already given in Colossians, this new and splendid imagery should occur to Paul, and he would promptly add it to his second letter. On the other hand it is almost inconceivable that, if he had written Ephesians first and were repeating from it the counsel already given, he would omit what is by far its noblest paragraph.

It may be noticed that the sentence about Tychicus, "whom I have sent to you for this very purpose, that ye may know our estate, and that he may comfort your hearts", is verbally the same in both letters.

A summarized paraphrase of the letter follows :

(1) Paul the Apostle and Timothy pray for God's blessing on the Christians of Colossae.

In my prayers I can always remember you with thanksgiving, having been told of your faith, your love, your hope—a hope brought to you long ago through the preaching of the Gospel, which bears increasing fruit among you, as it does all the world over. It was the faithful Epaphras who brought you the Gospel, and he it is who has told me how real is your spiritual love. From the day he gave me this news, I have never ceased to pray for you, asking God to grant you that fuller knowledge of his will which the highest wisdom gives, so that you may lead lives worthy of him whose name you bear. So will you be rich in good deeds, ever learning more of God, strong to endure with patience, and grateful to the Father who fits us to share the inheritance of the saints in heaven.

He has rescued us from the power of darkness and set us in the kingdom of his Son. Through the Son our sins are forgiven, in whom the unseen God is incarnate. By him all things, both visible and invisible, were created, including angels and all other spiritual beings. Yes, note; he was before all these; the whole scheme of existence finds its unity in him. And he is the head of the church, which is his Body. In him the Godhead dwells, and by him all in heaven and earth alike were united, through the peace which he made by dying on the Cross. Remember your own record; formerly you were estranged from and hostile to God, doing evil works. Yet now, by virtue of Christ's death, you can stand in God's presence pure and unashamed—provided always you remain loyal to the true Gospel which you heard.

Of that Gospel, now preached throughout the world, I, Paul, am a minister. I can rejoice in my sufferings, because it is for your sake that I bear them—for your sake, and that of the whole church, and I follow Christ by suffering in my turn. My mission is to proclaim openly that which was

unknown to past ages, and this secret, now disclosed by God's will, holds glorious riches for you Gentiles. Christ is among you ; Christ is the hope of your glory ! Such is the Christ whom I preach, such the message I bring, in the hope that all may stand in God's presence in perfect union with Christ. This is my task, and the power of God gives me strength to perform it.

(2) Yes, I want you to know how intense is my effort to serve you, and the Christians of Laodicea, and all whom, like you, I have never met. May they all be courageous, united, strong in holding what they have learned, and eager to learn more from Christ, the one source of true knowledge. I must warn you against being misled by plausible arguments. I am with you in spirit, though I cannot be with you in person, and I recognize gladly your loyalty to the faith of Christ.

See, then, that you increase in this faith. Take care that you are not decoyed away from it by a false philosophy, human in its origin and mundane in its scope. I repeat : Christ is God incarnate ; by him your own lives must be filled. He is supreme over all angelic powers. Yours is the true circumcision, spiritual and not human. It came to you through baptism, for in your baptism you were, it may be said, both buried with Christ and also raised to life with him, through your faith in the power of the God who raised Christ from the dead. He has forgiven our sins, he has repealed the Law of ordinances that formerly condemned us by nailing it to the Cross. He set himself, and us, free from all the spirit-powers of evil ; on the Cross he put them to open shame and triumphed over them.

Disregard, therefore, anyone who takes you to task over such matters as what you eat or drink, or over the observance of annual, monthly or weekly holy-days. Such things were merely shadows of what was to come ; the substance is in Christ. Let none prescribe rules for you about asceticism and angel-worship. He that does this relies on his imagina-

tion and is proud of his own intellect, instead of keeping, as a member of the church, in touch with its Divine Head. With Christ you died, so to speak, to the "Elementals", the unseen worldly spirits. Why then still remain subject to worldly rules, such as "You must not touch this; you must not eat that"—all referring to things that perish with use? Such rules are merely human; of seeming wisdom as a guide to self-imposed penances and asceticism, yet of no value as a protection against our lower nature.

(3) You, as it were, died to sin and shared Christ's burial, now that you are risen with him, your thoughts must be fixed on the things of heaven, where Christ now reigns; and when he returns in glory, that glory you will share. Therefore kill all the evil desires and sensual passions within you, causing the sins which incur God's wrath on those who disobey him. Once you were of that company, but now you must renounce such evils, together with all evil temper and evil talk; it must be your rule to speak the truth. For now you have freed yourselves from your old nature and its ways; put on instead the new nature, which continually will come nearer to the pattern of him who created it. In that new life the distinctions vanish between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, all those whom the Greeks and Romans label as "foreigners", between slave and freeman. Henceforward Christ is all in all!

Therefore, as God's chosen people, be sympathetic, kind, humble, gentle; making allowances for one another and being ready to forgive any against whom you have a grievance—even as Christ has forgiven you. Above all else be loving, for love is the bond which holds together all parts of the ideal life. The peace of God is yours, as members of the church; let it rule your hearts and fill you with thanksgiving.

Let Christ's teaching make you wise, and do you in turn instruct one another, so that your thanksgiving may be

expressed in psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. In short, let your every deed be done, your every word be spoken, in Christ's name, and declare your gratitude to God through him.

Wives, obey your husbands ; husbands, love your wives. Children, do as your parents bid ; parents, avoid discouraging your children by bad temper. Slaves, fulfil the commands of your earthly masters, and this not only when they are watching you, but wholeheartedly and in the fear of God. Whatever your work may be, do it thoroughly, as in the service of God, not of men. As Christ's slaves, your due, as you know, will be paid you, even as the evil-doer will receive the evil he has deserved ; there is no regard for human rank with God.

(4) Masters, treat your slaves fairly, knowing that you in turn have a Master in heaven.

Persevere with your prayers and thanksgivings, and include me in your petitions, asking that God may give me opportunity to proclaim the inmost truths of Christ—the truths for the sake of which I am now a prisoner. Pray that I may make them known as I should. Be discreet in your attitude to the pagan world ; use to the full every opportunity. Let your talk always be flavoured with the grace of God, and then you will know how to answer every question.

The beloved Tychicus, my fellow-worker, will give you news of me ; I am sending him that he may do this and give you courage. With him goes Onesimus, one of yourselves. These two will tell you of all that happens here. Aristarchus, in prison here with me, sends his greeting, as do Mark, cousin of Barnabas—I have already told you to make him welcome if he comes to you—and Justus. Their help—they are the only fellow-workers I have here from among the Jewish Christians—has been of great comfort. Epaphras greets you ; he too is a Colossian, a servant of Christ, full of faith, who prays earnestly that you may not

fall away, contrary to God's will. He has the greatest concern for you, as for the churches at Laodicea and Hierapolis. Luke, beloved physician, greets you, as does Demas. Remember me to the Christians of Laodicea, to Nympha, and to the gathering which meets for worship in her house. When this letter has been read aloud to your church, see that it is read to the Laodicean church also, and do yourselves read the letter which will be sent on from there. A special word to Archippus : Take care to fulfil the work which the Lord has placed in your hands.

"Here is a final word in my own handwriting. Remember Paul, the prisoner, in your prayers ! Grace be with you."

NOTES

i, 4. Faith, hope and love are all named in this verse, which will remind every reader of the last sentence of 1 Cor. xiii.

i, 15-17. "All things were created by him, and for him, and he is before all things and by him all things consist" is a conception of Christ's place in the cosmic scheme which has no parallel elsewhere in Paul's writings. It recalls strikingly the Prologue to the Fourth Gospel : "In the beginning was the Word . . . all things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made". It was a doctrine assimilated by Christianity from the philosophers of Alexandria, one which possibly had reached Paul through Apollos. His statement of it here, in a letter earlier by about quarter of a century than the Fourth Gospel, shows the greatness and range of his intellectual powers. His reason for making use of it at this point is clear enough. Heretical teachers at Colossae were encouraging the worship of angels. Paul replies that to worship

them is to place them on an equality with Christ, whereas they are merely created beings, and these "thrones, dominions, principalities, powers" could not have been brought into existence apart from the creative work of Christ.

ii, 23. The meaning of the last sentence of chapter ii is extremely doubtful, and the interpretation given it in the above paraphrase is only one of many.

iii, 11. "Barbarian" was the generic name of contempt used by the Greeks to describe a foreigner, and "Scythian" was used in the same sense by citizens of the Roman Empire.

iv, 14. This mention of Luke the evangelist as "the beloved physician" recalls a felicitous Latin epigram about him :

Utilis ille labor, per quem vivere tot aegri;
Utilior, per quem tot didicere mori,

"useful that work of his which enabled so many sick folk to live ; more useful still, that which taught so many how to die".

Demas, alas, afterwards forsook Paul, "having loved this present world" (2 Tim. iv, 10). Archippus we shall meet again in the first sentence of the letter to Philemon. His task may have been to take the place of Epaphras in the church of Colossae while Epaphras was away in Rome.

iv, 16. Paul's Epistle to the Laodiceans, which the Colossians also were to read, is probably one of many letters written by him to various churches which have not survived. One theory, accepted by a good many scholars, is that the so-called "Ephesians" is really this Epistle to the Laodiceans. Common

sense seems against that view. As we have noticed, a considerable part of Ephesians is almost identical with what is said in Colossians. If Ephesians is really the Epistle to the Laodiceans, Paul directed that it must be sent to Colossae in order that the Christians there might listen once again to the same advice as he had already given them in their own letter, and this hardly seems probable.

PHILEMON

BESIDES the letters which, as an apostle and teacher, Paul wrote to the churches he must have had a large private correspondence. The papyri recovered from the sands of Egypt have shown how freely the people of Paul's time, rich and poor alike, interchanged letters and notes on all kinds of business, domestic and personal matters. But Paul himself would have been astonished to know that one of his private letters was destined to have a place in the scriptures. Its presence there was resented by Jerome, Chrysostom and many others as incongruous. No modern reader can share that opinion. Philemon differs completely, no doubt, from all the other Epistles in the Bible. It is merely a private note to a friend about a slave, without a word of doctrinal teaching or spiritual advice. Yet it is a quite beautiful little letter, and it reveals, as nothing else does so convincingly, one of the finest aspects of its writer's character.

Philemon, with his wife Apphia and his son Archippus, lived at Colossae. Before he became a resident there he had met and been converted to the Christian faith by Paul. He was a rich man, and his house was large enough to be used as a meeting-place by the Colossian Christians. As yet, of course, there were no church buildings. Among his slaves was one called Onesimus, a name which means

"profitable". It did not prove appropriate, for Onesimus robbed his master and then absconded. His crime made him liable to crucifixion, but he contrived to make his escape to Rome, where the slaves' quarter of the city was the common hiding-place of fugitive criminals. Thence he was brought to Paul, possibly enough by Epaphras, who, as a member of the Colossian church, must have known Philemon and his household. By Paul Onesimus was instructed and baptized, and soon the relationship between them became one of affection. Papyri brought to light in modern times show that at least many slaves were far from uneducated and wrote excellent letters. Onesimus was able to show his gratitude by being of great service to Paul, perhaps acting as his amanuensis or going on errands for him—because Paul himself, it will be remembered, was under arrest, and forbidden to leave the house he occupied.

But the day came when Paul was sending Tychicus with a letter to Colossae, and he felt, reluctantly enough, that Onesimus must accompany Tychicus and be returned to Philemon, his owner. This involved a tremendous risk for Onesimus. Public opinion would fully approve the infliction of the death penalty on a slave who had either robbed his master or run away, and Onesimus had done both. If he were thought too valuable a possession to be destroyed, he might be flogged and tortured. Philemon himself might be a kindly master and yet feel that to overlook the crimes of Onesimus would be unfair to other slave-owners. Paul, well aware of this, determined to plead for Onesimus in a personal letter to his master. He could appeal to something

beyond mere compassion, because Philemon and Onesimus were now fellow-Christians, and "in Christ", as he had just written in his letter to the Colossian church, the distinction between "bondman and freeman" vanishes.

So he wrote, and a letter more exquisite in tact, in wisdom, in kindly humour was never penned. If his letters to the churches bring Paul before us as a great apostle, an intrepid missionary, a profound thinker and theologian, this little private note reveals him as the pattern of a Christian gentleman.

The first aim of this letter, quite evidently, was to gain for the returning Onesimus not merely forgiveness and humane treatment but a positive welcome from his master, who was urged to treat him "no longer as a slave but as a beloved fellow-Christian". So, his offences forgiven and this new relationship established, he would settle down again happily in the household of Philemon. Paul shows plainly that if this result were brought about by his letter he would be content. Indeed, almost all the commentators, both ancient and modern, assume that he wanted nothing more; they fail to see that he made, tentatively, an alternative request, the granting of which would please him still better. This was pointed out recently by an American scholar, Dr. John Knox, of the University of Chicago, whose interpretation seems convincingly right. Indeed, the matter is not one of conjecture but only of paying due attention to Paul's actual words. The inner purpose of what has happened may be, he admits, that Onesimus, pardoned and welcomed, should remain at Colossae in Philemon's service. Yet, so far as his personal wishes are concerned, this would be no more

than the second-best ending of the story. What he would vastly prefer, what he hopes may happen—though he will not explicitly ask for it—is that Philemon should release Onesimus from slavery by manumission and enable him to go back to Rome, there to resume his place as Paul's companion and helper. To quote from the letter itself (verses 12-14): "I am sending him back, though to do this is like parting with my very heart! I wanted to keep him here, that, as your deputy, he might minister to me during my imprisonment. But I would not do this without your consent; I should like this kindness to be your own free act, not done under compulsion." Could anything, short of the direct request which Paul prefers not to make, be plainer than this? All he will definitely ask for is pardon and a kindly welcome for Onesimus. Yet (verse 21) "Even as I write this, I feel sure that you will do not only all that I have asked, but far more". What that further boon is he has already shown.

That Philemon fully granted Paul's first wish and pardoned Onesimus we may fairly regard as certain. Had he done otherwise, he would promptly have destroyed Paul's letter, and we should not have it in the Bible to-day. Did he also fulfil the apostle's hope by releasing Onesimus and sending him back to Rome? But this question may be better asked in another form: Could he, Paul's convert and disciple, have failed to do this after reading such a letter? Ignatius, writing in the first years of the second century, mentions an Onesimus as bishop of Ephesus. The name was so common that we cannot confidently identify him with Philemon's Onesimus, yet a fairly

ancient tradition did so. At Ephesus, in all probability, the collection and issue of Paul's letters was carried out, some twenty-five years after his death. If the Onesimus who was bishop of Ephesus were Paul's Onesimus, it seems reasonable to believe that he was the "editor" to whom the church owes the collection of the Pauline Epistles. This, it must be said frankly, is no more than a possibility. Yet it does seem a reasonable possibility, and, if it happens to be true, it explains fully how this personal and private letter, inexpressibly precious to Onesimus, came to be included in the collection issued to the church and, to our vast gain, is found in our Bible to-day.

The letter is so short that it can be given here in full in a free translation, with a phrase here and there slightly amplified to make clear its meaning.

To our much-loved friend and fellow-worker for Christ, Philemon ; to Apphia, dear as a sister ; to Archippus, our fellow-soldier, and to the church which meets at their house ;

I, Paul, imprisoned here for Christ's sake, and Timothy, a member of the church, wish the blessing and the peace that come from God and our Lord Jesus Christ.

I can always remember you with thankfulness when I name you, Philemon, in my prayers, because I have heard of the love and faith which you show both towards our Lord and towards all your fellow-churchmen. I pray that they may share your faith, and realize increasingly, like yourself, the further goodness to which a Christian can attain. Indeed, as I know the good cheer your example has brought to the church, these reports about you have given me great joy and encouragement, my brother.

And because brother you are to me, when I might have

used my apostolic authority to lay commands on you, I prefer, for love's sake, to approach you as a suppliant—I, Paul, an old man, now in prison for the cause of Christ. Yes, I entreat you for Onesimus, who is, as it were, my spiritual son, born to me here in prison. Despite his name, he was “unprofitable”, “unchristian”, enough to you in the past! But now he is a “good Christian” both to you and me. I am sending him back, though to do this is like parting with my very heart! I wanted to keep him here, that, as your deputy, he might minister to me during my imprisonment. But I would not do this without your consent; I should like this kindness to be your free act, not done under compulsion.

Yet possibly the very reason of your separation from him for a time was that you might now regain him permanently—and in a new relationship, no longer a mere slave but a beloved fellow-Christian. If you count me your comrade, give Onesimus a welcome of the same kind as you would give me! If, as I understand, he has defrauded you and is in your debt, charge that to me. Here is a promissory note in my own handwriting: “I, Paul, promise to pay the amount”! Yet, if it comes to speaking of debts, I need hardly remind you that what you owe to me is your spiritual life, your best self. Make me happy, then, by granting this request; cheer my heart by your Christ-like conduct.

Indeed, even as I write this, I feel sure that you will do not only all that I have asked, but far more. Get a room ready for me, because I hope that your prayers for my release will be answered, and that before long I shall be able to visit you.

Epaphras, who for Christ's sake shares this prison-house with me, sends his greeting, as also do those fellow-workers of mine, Mark, Aristarchus, Demas and Luke. May the blessing of the Lord Jesus Christ rest upon your souls!

NOTES

11. It is impossible to reproduce exactly in English Paul's humorous play on words in this verse. It has a twofold force. The name Onesimus means "profitable"; in the past he was far from deserving this name from you, Paul observes to Philemon. But there is a further point in the adjectives he uses, *achrestos* and *euchrestos*. Tertullian and other writers mention that the Greeks and Romans, to whom our Lord's title "Christos" ("anointed") had no meaning, commonly substituted for it "Chrestos", which means "useful" or "profitable". Formerly, Paul says, this man called "profitable" was in no way "chrestos" to you, but now in a double sense he deserves that epithet, because he is both "useful" and "a follower of Christ".

23. It is with humorous gratitude that Paul terms Epaphras here, and Aristarchus in Colossians, "my fellow-prisoner". Neither was under arrest, but both—perhaps in turn—voluntarily lodged with Paul in the house where he was confined, in order to be near at hand and to give him the utmost help.

25. Except in the first and last verses, the pronouns are singular—"thou" and "thy"—because the letter is a personal one to Philemon. But in the last verse the plural pronoun is used again, because Paul wishes his benediction to include Apphia and Archippus.

PHILIPPIANS

THIS, the latest of Paul's letters to the churches which has survived, may be thought the most attractive of all. True, in its four short chapters there is no space for the sustained profundity of thought found in some parts of the Roman Epistle, for those impassioned attacks on false teaching which make Galatians glow with fire, or for lengthy passages which haunt the memory as do some in 1 Corinthians. Yet many aspects of Paul's varied genius are revealed in its brief space. When, at one point, he wishes to enforce the lessons of humility and unselfishness upon the Philippians, it is upon the profoundest mystery of the Incarnation that he chooses to base his appeal, and he dictates a sentence which ever since has had a foremost place in Christian theology. When for a moment he pauses to do battle once more with the Judaizers, he hits as hard, he becomes as fierce, even truculent, a controversialist as in any part of his Galatian letter. But when he speaks in gratitude and affection to his friends at Philippi, no-one can be more tender-hearted, more exquisite in courtesy, in charm, in complete understanding of the people to whom he writes. Anyone who imagines the Epistles to be difficult or dull reading should be recommended to begin not with Romans but with Philemon—though this, as we have seen, is exceptional in the sense of being a private and personal letter—and this

letter to the Philippian church. No others will enable him to realize so quickly the splendid personality of the writer. And soon, perhaps to the reader's surprise, he will find himself not only admiring the devoted follower of our Lord, the intrepid missionary, the skilful organizer, the great thinker, but beginning to understand and to love Paul the man.

Philippians is, as a whole, a cheerful and joyous letter. The writer is happy, and many times over he tells the Philippians to rejoice ; he insists on the place of joy among the chief Christian virtues. To appreciate what this characteristic means, we need to remember the circumstances in which the letter was written. For two years Paul had been in close confinement, unable to carry on his work of visiting the churches and preaching the Gospel. A soldier was on guard in the room he occupied ; a chain may have attached him to the sentry. Even without this humiliating detail, it is easy to imagine the strain of close confinement and inability to preach on a man of Paul's temperament. Now he knew that his trial before Nero was soon to take place, and this, as likely as not, would promptly be followed by his execution. Such were the conditions in which Paul wrote a radiantly happy letter. The Philippians to whom he wrote were persecuted always with scorn and often with violence by their fellow-citizens. Such was the condition of the people for whom Paul thinks the most suitable precept is " rejoice, and again I say unto you, rejoice ".

Some ten years earlier Paul had paid his first visit to Philippi, which was indeed the first important place he entered after crossing from Asia to Europe. The story of his stay in the house of Lydia, his

arrest, his conversion of the gaoler, his escape, and the panic among the local magistrates on finding that they had imprisoned and beaten a Roman citizen, is recorded in Acts xvi. Paul seems to have been in Philippi twice between this first visit and the writing of his letter from Rome. But always the church he had founded there kept in touch with him. Though, at least in its early days, a small community, it seems to have included some people, like Lydia, of substantial means. No church loved Paul better, or showed its love in a more practical fashion. Continually it sent him presents, probably of both money and food, and these were of great service to him on his travels. Most welcome of all, however, was the gift they had contrived to despatch to him while he was in Rome as a prisoner. It was brought by a Philippian named Epaphroditus, who also gave the apostle the latest news of his home church.

Most of it was of a kind that Paul could welcome. Unhappily the rigorous Jews who hated Paul and his teaching were active in Philippi, as in many other places. They were asserting, like those of Galatia, that true relationship with God could be established only by circumcision and by strict observance of the ceremonial law. When their arguments had failed to make church members abandon Christianity as they had received it from Paul, argument was followed by persecution. Yet this also had failed to shake the steadfast loyalty of the Philippian church. It was not quite free, Epaphroditus was obliged to add, from certain small internal troubles. These were of a kind that did not end with the first century. There was some degree of discord, because a few of the Christians were too self-opinionated and intent

on asserting their own importance. Again, there had been a regrettable and unedifying squabble between two devout women. A message from Paul, Epaphroditus probably suggested, would be the surest means of ending these troubles.

Not for some time, however, could he carry back a letter, because he fell seriously ill. News of his misfortune reached Philippi, causing his friends there great anxiety. But he recovered, and, when strong enough to make the long journey, carried the Epistle to the Philippians with him. What has been said will make clear Paul's main purposes in writing it :

(i) He wanted to give the news about himself for which his friends were longing. They were to know that he was happy. Whether the trial which now seemed imminent would lead to his acquittal or condemnation, he could not say ; indeed, he hardly knew for which he ought to wish. Whatever the upshot, he was content. On the whole, it seemed more likely that God's will would be his release. Soon he would send Timothy to visit them, and later, if he were acquitted, he would come himself. Meanwhile, his friends must not fear that his imprisonment had meant an end to the preaching of the Gospel ; on the contrary, this, through a variety of motives, had increased.

(ii) He wished to emphasize the need of humility and unity among the church-people of Philippi and to end their quarrels.

(iii) He intended to say a few very plain words about the Judaizers attempting to pervert them by insidious arguments, threats or actual persecution.

(iv) He wanted to praise the Philippians warmly, and to offer them encouragement and wise counsel so that they might reach a yet higher standard.

And (v) he

wanted to express his intense gratitude for the most welcome present from them which Epaphroditus had brought.

As we study this, the last of Paul's ten great letters in our possession, it is interesting to look back and to notice his intellectual and spiritual progress during the eleven or twelve years which lie between the earliest and the last of the series. The interval is wide between the homely advice mingled with rather crude apocalyptic beliefs which we found in the Thessalonian Epistles and the heights of thought to which he has attained by the time that *Philippians* is written. In *Galatians* he is an effective controversialist, defending Christianity against a dangerous attack. In *I Corinthians* we find in chapter xiii the Christian ethic at its best and in chapter xv a statement of the resurrection doctrine. In *Romans* we mount yet higher with its splendid meditations on the nature of the Atonement. But in the *Captivity letters* Paul shows that he has now formed something like a philosophy of religion. He ponders not the things of this world alone but the inward meaning of the whole cosmic process when, in *Colossians*, he identifies Christ with the creative, pre-existent Word. When, finally, he wishes to extol the virtue of humility in writing to the *Philippians*, the way he now does this is to relate what he has to say with the profoundest mystery of the Incarnation—the relationship of the Godhead with the Manhood in Christ. The prayer he makes repeatedly for others has been fulfilled for himself; within these years he has grown in grace, wisdom and knowledge.

The beautiful *Philippian* letter shall now be summarized :

(1) Paul and Timothy wish God's blessing and peace to all the Christians at Philippi, with their church officers.

Whenever I think of you in my prayers, I do so with thankfulness and joy, remembering your continuous help in the spreading of the Gospel. God will complete, I am sure, the good work he has begun in you. You are much in my heart, my love is deep, knowing your sympathy with me both in my missionary work and now that I am in prison. What I ask for you is that you may make yet more spiritual progress, gaining knowledge and insight, bringing forth the fruits of righteousness to the glory of God.

I want you to realize that what has befallen me has not hindered but helped the spreading of the Gospel. Everyone here, including the soldiers of the Praetorian guard, understands that it is as a Christian that I am imprisoned. And the fact that I am tied here has spurred on most of the Christian brethren to greater energy, so that they preach more boldly than before. Some, no doubt, do it in rivalry of me, while others do it of good will. The former imagine that the news of their activity will cause me pain. What does it matter? All that concerns me is that Christ is being preached, from whatever motive, and about this I am, and shall continue to be, glad.

I know I shall be helped by your prayers and the Divine Spirit, so that by my courage, whether I am to live or to die, I shall cause Christ to be honoured. For me life is Christ, death is gain. You remind me that life here means useful work . . . then I hesitate about my choice! For my own part, I would rather quit this world and be with Christ—how infinitely better! But for your sake it may be more needful that I should remain. . . . Yes, and as I ponder this, I believe I shall remain, continuing to help you in your spiritual life, and causing you to rejoice in Christ over my return to you.

But, whatever happens, do live worthily of the Gospel, so that, whether I can be with you or can only have reports

about you, I may know that you are unitedly standing together and striving for the faith, unafraid of your enemies. This will be a sign of destruction to them, of salvation to you. Your privilege it is not only to believe in Christ but to suffer for his sake, now that, being persecuted, you have to endure trials of the same kind that you saw me suffer when I was with you at Philippi, and now hear that I am suffering in Rome.

(2) "Unitedly", I said just now. Yes, by all you have received from Christ, I entreat you to give me complete happiness in this respect. Let me know that you live in harmony, of one heart and soul—not with each man thinking of his own gain or fame, but with due consideration for others. Take Christ himself as your pattern, who, though Divine, did not regard his Godhead as something to be clung to, but, as it were, emptied himself of it, taking the nature of a servant and appearing in human form. Not only did he take human form, but he humbled himself to die; not only did he die, but he died the most humiliating of deaths, on the Cross. Therefore God raised him to the highest place, and set his Name above all others, so that all in heaven and earth should kneel in worship, and every tongue should confess, "Jesus Christ is the Lord", to the glory of God the Father.

Therefore, you much-loved friends of mine, I entreat you to do everything for your spiritual welfare, whether I am with you or absent, and God will give you both the best desires and the power to fulfil them. Avoid disputes; set a good example to all men, as lights in a dark world. Then at the Last Day I shall be proud of you, and able to claim that my work has not been in vain. Yes, even if my life-blood must mingle with your faith as an offering to God, still I shall rejoice, and I bid you share my joy.

Soon I hope to send Timothy, that I may be cheered by getting news of you. No-one else cares so much for

you ; too many men are engrossed by their own affairs. But he has been like a son to me. As soon as ever I know my fate, I propose to send him, though I have every hope of being able to come myself before long. Epaphroditus, however—my fellow-worker, your messenger—I am sending now ; he has been anxious to reassure you, knowing that you had heard of his illness. Ill indeed he was, and near to death. But God had mercy on him, and on me too, to whom his death would have meant yet further sorrow. So I am glad to send him, and do you welcome him as one who nearly gave his life for the work of Christ, rendering to me that personal aid which you at a distance were unable to supply.

(3) In short, my brothers, rejoice in the Lord. I repeat myself, you think ? No matter ; “ To me not irksome, it is safe for you ”.

Beware of those hounds, those evil-workers, those self-mutilators ! We are the real “ circumcised ”, we who worship God, take pride in Christ Jesus, rely on no human privileges. Though I, if I chose, could rely on them as much as any man !—I, duly circumcised, a Jew, a Benjaminite, the son of Aramaic-speaking parents, a Pharisee, who showed my zeal as a persecutor, irreproachable in my observance of the Law. Yet, for the sake of gaining Christ and being gained by him, I counted all these privileges worthless, mere dirt. It was not in my own merits but in those of Christ that I trusted, eager to know him and the power of his risen life, and to share his sufferings, thereby gaining the hope of sharing his resurrection. I do not imagine myself already to have attained to this, but I press on to lay hold of it—for which purpose Christ, as it were, laid hold on me. My one rule is to forget my past and to bend every power towards what lies ahead, like a runner with his eyes on the winning-post, to obtain God’s prize. Such is the view of mature wisdom, as God in due course will reveal, to any who think differently. To whatever

degree of the truth we have attained, in this truth let us find our rule of life.

Follow my example, and watch those who adopt this rule. Many there are—I have said it before, and must repeat it with tears—who are the enemies of the cross, doomed to destruction, rejoicing in their infamy, wholly sensual. But we are a colony of heaven. And we look for the coming of Christ from heaven, who will change this earthly body which humiliates us, transforming it by his power into the likeness of his glorified body. (4) So, my beloved friends, whom I long to see, stand fast in the Lord.

I implore Euodia, I implore Syntyche, to live in Christian agreement. And do you, Synzygos—for your name means “yoke-fellow” !—do what you can for these women. For they, like Clement and others, whose names are in God’s book of life, have helped me greatly in my work.

Rejoice in the Lord always. Yes, once more I repeat it—rejoice. Show forbearance to all, for the Lord who will judge is at hand. Never let yourselves be over-anxious, but tell God your needs, joining thanksgiving to your prayers. And so God’s peace, which transcends human understanding, shall, through the power of Christ, protect your hearts and minds.

In short, fix your thoughts on everything that is true or honourable, upright or pure, worthy of love or praise. Put into practice what you have learnt from my teaching or example, and the God of peace will be with you.

Your gift, a renewed sign of your affection for me, gave me much joy—not that your affection ever weakened, but for a time you were without an opportunity of showing it. And do not suppose me to be complaining of poverty ; I have learnt thoroughly the lesson of contentment, and, whether wealth or poverty, abundance or hunger, be my lot, I can meet it rightly through the strength given me by Christ. But your gift at this time of my imprisonment

was specially welcome. And I remember, when first I preached the Gospel in Europe, how no other church did so much for me ; on leaving you, I went to Thessalonica, and when I had gone only so far you sent and supplied my needs more than once. Do not think me greedy for gifts ; rather, I am thinking of the credit you will earn by such deeds of love. But now I am rich indeed, thanks to the present you have sent by Epaphroditus ; a fragrant—a Euodian—gift, an offering such as God approves. And the God in whom I trust will of his heavenly wealth supply all your needs. Glory be to him, our Father, for ever !

My greeting to every member of the church. All the brothers here with me greet you, and all church members, particularly they who belong to Caesar's household.

May your souls be filled with the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ ! Amen.

NOTES

i, 15. It seems unnecessary to suppose, as do many commentators, that those who preached the Gospel during Paul's imprisonment moved by "envy and strife" were the Judaizing Christians. Later in this letter (iii, 2) Paul states his opinion of these in the most vigorous terms, and it is quite inconceivable that he would have welcomed their preaching as an aid to his work. Much more probably the people referred to were orthodox Christian teachers envious of Paul's success and reputation. His imprisonment, they thought, gave them their chance. People would be more willing to listen to them and to swell their congregations now that the chance of hearing Paul was gone. Judging Paul by themselves, his rivals anticipated with pleasure the annoyance he would feel on hearing of their success. They were utterly wrong. "It does not pain me in the least", writes,

in effect, the great-hearted apostle. "As a consequence of my imprisonment, I gather that there is more preaching than before. This is what matters to me, not the discreditable motives of some of the preachers. I count what has happened as good news, and shall continue so to count it."

ii, 6, 7. Here we have the great passage which was destined to influence all Christian theology, with its doctrine that in the Incarnation our Lord voluntarily laid aside some of the attributes of his Divine nature. This is termed the doctrine of the *kenôsis*, "emptying", from the verb here used by Paul.

iii, 1. The first word of this chapter, translated "finally" in our Bible, has led some critics to think that the second verse is the beginning of another letter. But its abrupt change to an attack on the circumcision party is not uncharacteristic of Paul. And the word—or, strictly speaking, two words used as one—does not necessarily mean "in conclusion"; it is almost the exact equivalent of the French *enfin*, with the meaning "to sum up, then", "in short".

The last words of this verse, "to me indeed is not grievous, but for you it is safe", form, in the original, a line of Greek poetry, and have been rendered accordingly in the outline. It may be a quotation from some unknown source, or possibly no more than an accidental lapse into metre.

iii, 13. "The things behind" which Paul endeavours to forget are most often taken to mean the distressing memories of his days as a persecutor. If this interpretation were right, it would be difficult to account for the fact that he himself in his letters should refer more than once—an example is supplied only seven verses earlier—to his persecuting zeal.

We may believe with more reason, perhaps, that he is thinking of his past successes rather than of his past failures. It is not a weakness due to mournful and vain regrets that he shuns, but the peril of a complacent retrospect. He has achieved magnificent work, he has made in his own life immense spiritual progress. The temptation is to dwell upon the memory of the past, and to feel that no further effort is necessary. But this he will not do; he resolves to "forget those things which are behind", however gratifying they may seem, and still to press forward, like a runner with the winning-post still in the distance.

iii, 20. A "colony" in the Roman Empire was a town in some province of the Empire which formed, as it were, a local Rome, where the magistrates bore Roman titles and Roman law replaced the provincial law. Philippi was such a "colony", and here, because the Roman purple would be much in demand among citizens, Lydia found a good trade opening. Obviously, therefore, Paul's metaphor, declaring that in this world Christians form a "colony" of heaven—subject to its special laws—would be fully appreciated by his Philippian readers.

iii, 21. Readers should note that the translation in the Authorized Version, "our vile body", is misleading and unfortunate.

iv, 2, 18. Euodia's name is usually spelled with a short "o"—an *omicron*. But in a variant of it the long "o"—*omega*, was used, making the name Euōdia instead of Euōdia. The papyri give some evidence of this form (*Moulton-Milligan Vocabulary*, p. 263), and it found its way into what is known as the "Received Text" of the Greek New Testament.

The reason for mentioning this detail is that, in its form *Euōdia*, the meaning of the name is "pleasant odour", "fragrance". Therefore in verse 18 we may have another instance, like those in the *Philemon* letter, of Paul playing humorously on the meaning of a name. For in this verse he describes the present sent him from Philippi as "euodian", "fragrant"—an adjective which would have special force if he suspected that *Euodia* had taken a leading part in collecting and sending it! This suggestion is relatively, of course, quite unimportant, but it has not been made, so far as the present writer knows, in any of the commentaries on *Philippians*.

PART III
THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

•

•

THE PASTORAL EPISTLES

"THE Pastorals" is a convenient generic term, the use of which seems to date from the eighteenth century, for the First and Second Epistles to Timothy and the Epistle to Titus. It is, up to a point, an accurate description of these letters, because their contents include rules and directions for the life of the church addressed to men holding posts of authority and carrying on pastoral work within it. They are neither addressed to local churches, like the nine great letters of Paul, nor wholly personal and private, like his letter to Philemon. They stand far apart from those ten letters, and the true character, the date, the authenticity of the Pastorals form the most difficult problem of New Testament study—a problem which certainly cannot be said to have been definitely solved, and probably will remain insoluble. It is as well to emphasize this, because the general reader is often misled by some Biblical critics, whose unfortunate habit is to present the theories they have formed or accepted as though they were now finally established and indubitable facts. It is entirely right to say of some view that it seems a more satisfying hypothesis than any other and that the case for it seems convincing to the writer. It is entirely wrong to dupe the uninstructed reader into believing that no other hypothesis is or can be preferred by any competent scholar.

To avoid that risk, it seems desirable to allow in

this final chapter the occasional use of the first personal pronoun, which (except in the preface) has been carefully excluded from the rest of this book. I want to place before the reader the conclusions which, after long study, I have reached in regard to the difficult problem of the Pastorals—conclusions which, to be frank, differ from those I accepted and stated in some of my earlier books. Evidence brought to light since they were written has disproved, I think, some of their over-confident statements. But, while I believe the case for the opinion that will be stated in this chapter to be strong, not for a moment is the reader to suppose that I regard it as final. Like every other, it involves difficulties. Indeed, anyone who tries to study the problem of the Pastorals without prejudice may well feel that his task is to decide, not which of many theories is right, but which, on the whole, is the least improbable.

There are three principal interpretations of the Pastorals.

(i) They are what, to all appearances, they profess to be—genuine letters of pastoral counsel written by Paul to Timothy and Titus, and their language throughout is the actual language which Paul wrote or dictated.

(ii) Not a word of them was written by Paul. All three are the work of an unknown writer, who composed them about the middle of the second century—some eighty to eighty-five years after Paul's death. Their purpose was to meet the altered needs of the church at this date, as a kind of supplement to Paul's letters.

(iii) In their present form they are not the work of Paul. They are composite documents, later than his day, but whoever put them together included in

this final chapter the occasional use of the first personal pronoun, which (except in the preface) has been carefully excluded from the rest of this book. I want to place before the reader the conclusions which, after long study, I have reached in regard to the difficult problem of the Pastorals—conclusions which, to be frank, differ from those I accepted and stated in some of my earlier books. Evidence brought to light since they were written has disproved, I think, some of their over-confident statements. But, while I believe the case for the opinion that will be stated in this chapter to be strong, not for a moment is the reader to suppose that I regard it as final. Like every other, it involves difficulties. Indeed, anyone who tries to study the problem of the Pastorals without prejudice may well feel that his task is to decide, not which of many theories is right, but which, on the whole, is the least improbable.

There are three principal interpretations of the Pastorals.

(i) They are what, to all appearances, they profess to be—genuine letters of pastoral counsel written by Paul to Timothy and Titus, and their language throughout is the actual language which Paul wrote or dictated.

(ii) Not a word of them was written by Paul. All three are the work of an unknown writer, who composed them about the middle of the second century—some eighty to eighty-five years after Paul's death. Their purpose was to meet the altered needs of the church at this date, as a kind of supplement to Paul's letters.

(iii) In their present form they are not the work of Paul. They are composite documents, later than his day, but whoever put them together included in

them some sentences actually written by Paul. Other portions of the documents may be re-written versions of sentences he himself had written or spoken ; yet others are the work of the editor. This blend, though it could not be attributed as a whole to Paul, might in a sense be described as Pauline.

Such, briefly summarized, are the three theories. A question which will immediately suggest itself to many readers is, Why should we not be content with the first? Why not believe these three documents—as the Christian church did almost without question for sixteen centuries—to be genuine letters written by Paul the Apostle to Timothy and Titus? It is true that they cannot be fitted into Paul's life so far as that is recorded by Acts and the ten letters. But an early tradition declared that his trial at Rome, which lay in the immediate future when he wrote Philippians, resulted in his acquittal—as in both Philemon and Philippians he himself anticipated. Then, for about two years, he was able to resume his missionary work. In Romans he mentioned his intention of visiting Spain, and Clement of Rome, writing about A.D. 96, says that Paul "reached the farthest bounds of the West", which—though some interpret it as Rome—may well mean Spain. The definite statement that he was acquitted at his first trial, and after a period of freedom, was again imprisoned in Rome and martyred, is first found in the history of Eusebius, written in the year 324. If it is accurate—there is no real evidence to the contrary, and Paul's expectation of release when he wrote to Philemon and the Philippians is unquestionable—there is no difficulty in assigning 1 Timothy and Titus to the interval between the two imprison-

ments, and 2 Timothy, with its noble farewell, to the eve of his execution.

But, when this has been said, other and far more serious obstacles must make us hesitate to accept the three letters as, in their entirety, the genuine work of Paul. Perhaps the greatest of them is one which is evident only to those who can read the Epistles in Greek. This shall be mentioned later. First, however, let the reader contemplate the letters thoughtfully as a whole. Everyone who does this must feel, I believe, how vastly inferior they are to the authentic ten. Their atmosphere is different, their thought is at a lower level. Looking back as we finished Philippians, we observed how steadily through the series Paul's spiritual and intellectual powers increased. But if the captivity letters were followed by the Pastorals, we are confronted by a tragic relapse, in place of the culmination we might have expected. On this point it is interesting to notice the words of Canon E. F. Brown, who edited the Pastorals in the *Westminster Commentaries*. What he says is the more striking because he cannot bring himself to give up belief in the Pauline authorship: in the Pastorals, he writes, "we get a group of letters which in comparison with S. Paul's earlier ones are tame and pedestrian; which deal with the nice regulation of human conduct rather than with any wide principles of eternal application; whose very morality is commonplace, its highest virtues discretion and prudence, the avoidance of drinking and money-seeking, seldom rising into the enunciation of a great principle or offering a flash of insight into the divine dealing. It would almost be a relief to know that these epistles are not by S. Paul."

Every sensitive reader, I believe, will endorse this judgment, and will be glad if he need no longer accept as Paul's final production work which falls far short of his best. From this general impression we may pass to notice a few details in these letters—details of a kind that in ordinary reading are apt to escape notice. We will turn to the letters which profess to be personally addressed to Timothy, of whom we know far more than we do of Titus. Timothy, we must remember, had been Paul's intimate friend and companion, his "beloved son", for about twenty years. Could Paul conceivably need at this stage to inform Timothy, with vehement emphasis, that he is an apostle and a teacher of the Gentiles? Yet "I am ordained a preacher, and an apostle (I speak the truth in Christ, and lie not), a teacher of the Gentiles" are the words he is supposed to write to Timothy. If Timothy were aged twenty at the time when, described as "a certain disciple", he first joined Paul, he would be about forty when this letter is supposed to have been written. Is "let no man despise thy youth" a sentence which would have been addressed to a man of forty?

It would be easy to multiply such details. But let us turn to the conclusion of the second letter. It contains Paul's deeply moving and impressive farewell. "I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith; hereafter there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness"—it is surely impossible to doubt that this is genuine, the actual message of Paul, and not words invented and placed in his mouth by an anonymous writer of the second century. Yet it is one

thing to believe this ; it is quite another to suppose that the sentences stand in their true place as parts of an authentic letter. Paul's "time of departure is at hand" ; he speaks as one already under the shadow of death. Yet in the letter these sentences are followed by others which seem a quite impossible sequel. Although Paul clearly expects the executioner at any moment, Mark is told to make the long journey from somewhere in Asia to Rome, not immediately, but as soon as he can, and at latest before the following winter. He is to pause on his way to fetch Mark and to collect from Troas a cloak, with some papyri rolls and codices—of what use would these be to a man on the point of death? In the farewell sentences Paul mentions that only Luke remains with him : all his other friends have departed. Ten verses later he sends greetings to Timothy from Eubulus, Pudens, Linus, Claudia and "all the brethren". I believe that the sentences of farewell are the authentic utterance of Paul. I believe that the later sentences—the request that Timothy will come as soon as he conveniently can, the directions about the cloak and the papyri, the greetings from four named and many unnamed friends (who must have been with Paul when he wrote in order to send their message)—are also written by the apostle. What I find it impossible to believe is that the two sets of sentences are rightly placed, or that they belong to the same letter.

The argument that the conditions of church life reflected in the Pastorals and the errors which they attack belong to a period long after Paul's death seems precarious ; our knowledge of what developments had and what had not been reached by the

year 65 is too slight to be conclusive. Yet that the general point of view in the Pastorals is different from that of the ten letters seems incontestable. While the Pastorals apparently include at intervals some genuine fragments of Paul's writings, they contain also much which, when set beside his undisputed work, must be thought alien from his spirit, remote from his interests, and strikingly unlike his style.

But the main obstacle to accepting the Pastorals as wholly the work of Paul becomes evident when they are read in Greek. How serious the obstacle is has been revealed through the prodigious industry of Dr. P. N. Harrison. He analysed the language of the ten letters and the Pastorals with almost incredible minuteness, noting exactly how many times each word in them is used. In Paul's ten letters, he tells us, 2177 words are employed. The vocabulary of the three Pastorals—omitting proper names—is made up of 848 different words, and of those 848—this is the startling fact—no fewer than 306 occur in the Pastorals alone. Not one of them is found even once in any of the ten letters.

Various attempts have been made to account for this fact. It has been said, for instance, that a writer's style and vocabulary change in course of time. This, within limits, is true, but if the Pastorals are the work of Paul, they cannot be later than Philippians by more than about two years. Again, it is urged that the altered vocabulary is due to the fact that the subjects treated in the Pastorals are, to a large extent, different from those treated in the ten letters. This explanation will not serve, because the changes are not merely in the nouns and verbs but in the particles and conjunctions. For favourite

phrases of Paul, always used elsewhere when he has a special thought to express, new phrases are substituted in the Pastorals. These also have their favourite phrases ; " faithful is the saying " occurs four times in the Pastorals, not once in the ten letters. Of single words used once only in the Pastorals and the ten letters, the average number is two such words in every eleven sentences of 1 Corinthians, two such words in every three sentences of the Pastorals. A suggestion has been made that Paul left the writing of the Pastorals to an amanuensis, merely indicating in general terms what he wished to be said. It is most difficult to believe that this procedure would have satisfied him, or that, having never adopted it when writing to the churches, he would adopt it when writing to Timothy and Titus, his intimate friends.

When all the cumulative evidence has been dispassionately considered, we may well feel obliged, with whatever regret, to abandon the belief that the Pastorals in their present form are simply letters written by Paul to Timothy and Titus. Yet, immense as are the obstacles in the way of that belief, I should still accept it were there no alternative but the view that the Pastorals are nothing more than a second-century fabrication. This extreme theory has lost much ground among scholars, and those who hold it to-day are probably but a small minority. Yet it has had the recent support of Dr. Goodspeed, Professor Nock and some others. This interpretation of the Pastorals holds, in the words of Dr. Goodspeed, that they " were written in Rome, about the middle of the second century or soon after, and made a part of a new edition of the Pauline letters ".

They were given the form of letters to Timothy and Titus because "by this time Titus and Timothy belonged to everybody and had become suitable symbols of the Christian ministry of the Pauline type". All three letters were, from start to finish, the imaginative composition of one unknown man. The personal details with which they abound, such as the mention of Paul's cloak and writing materials, were this man's inventions. "They belong", Dr. Goodspeed declares, "to the rudiments of fiction", and "are simply attempts at verisimilitude".

No reader who has gained any practical knowledge of the art of fiction, even by writing a few short stories, will be likely to endorse Dr. Goodspeed's opinion. It is not difficult to imagine how anyone wishing to imitate Paul's epistolary style in a convincing fashion would have set about his task. No doubt he would have tried to invent some lifelike details. But, had he happened to think of the cloak and papyri for this purpose, he would not have brought in the reference to them after he had made Paul address his last words of farewell to Timothy. If, in a desire for realism, he introduced various names as those of Paul's friends, he would not have chosen names which are nowhere to be found in the apostle's authentic letters. If, for the sake of contrast, he had decided to picture one of Paul's friends as a deserter, his choice would not have fallen on Demas, whom Paul had twice named as a faithful comrade in his captivity. It would hardly have occurred to a fiction-writer to insert in the middle of his letter an abrupt command that Timothy should drink wine. He would not have adopted for these imitation letters a vocabulary strikingly different

from that used by Paul in his authentic work. In short, of all the theories about the Pastorals, that which invites us to regard them as a second-century forgery is the least credible. Even if we could accept it, we should still have to explain how, when the collection of Paul's genuine letters had been in the hands of the church for some sixty years, this addition to them could be made, and received without question as the work of Paul.

There remains the third hypothesis. In the first chapter of this book something was said of the way in which Paul's letters seem to have been collected and issued, probably at Ephesus, about the year 90. It is also, as was mentioned, a not improbable guess that the editor who carried out this work was Onesimus. Tradition makes Timothy bishop of Ephesus before Onesimus, and Paul's letters at least show that he spent much of his time there. Almost inevitably the editor, whether Onesimus or another, would consult Timothy, who was among the last survivors of Paul's intimate friends. To show the kind of thing that may have happened, let us be bold enough to imagine a conversation between Onesimus and Timothy.

O. : I am anxious to circulate among the churches all the writings I can find of our beloved master, Paul. Of course very many have been lost, but I have managed to get back nine of his finest letters to the churches. Then, years ago, Philemon gave me the letter about myself which Paul sent him—the letter which transformed my life.

T. : Do you mean that you propose to issue it with the others ? Surely it was just a private note ? Wouldn't it be rather out of place ?

O. : Yes, I expect many people will feel that it is. But I don't care ! My own feeling is that everything Paul wrote is so precious that it ought to be made known as widely as possible. Now I want your help. There was no-one whom Paul loved better than you. He must have sent you any number of letters.

T. : And I've treasured every scrap of his writing I could lay hands on, whether it was to me or anyone else. Titus gave me one little letter not long before he died. But I doubt if what I have will be of much use for your collection. I said I've treasured every scrap, and the whole doesn't amount to much more than a bundle of scraps—short notes, bits of unfinished letters and so on. You see, he never had occasion to write me a long letter. Most of the time we travelled about together. Often he sent me away on some errand to another place, but I always brought him back the news he wanted as quickly as possible—he used to worry dreadfully if I were delayed ! But when we were in the same town often we had to put up in different houses, and then he would send me little notes about all kinds of things—mere trifles, sometimes.

O. : Such as ?

T. : Well, one day he happened to notice that I looked ill—I often was, in point of fact. So just before dinner a note came round from him, telling me to drink a little wine instead of water. Even that note I kept.

O. : And even that note I should like to include in my collection. It shows the kind of man he was. But, to go to the other extreme, what bits of his writing among those you possess do you value most ?

T. : That I can answer easily—the glorious

message he sent me—his own epitaph, as it were—only a day or two before his death. About a month earlier he had sent a note summoning me to Rome, bringing Mark and some things he needed. I recollect, too, a lovely tribute to Onesiphorus, written when that friend of his had died.

O. : And what were the “bits of unfinished letters” you mentioned?

T. : O, again just scraps—notes for a letter to a church which he meant to dictate when time allowed, and so on. I remember, for instance, a scribbled sentence in which he declares that he is fully entitled to speak as an apostle. Then there are some practical rules for church officers, warnings against false doctrine—O, many things. But the whole lot would barely fill one of your smallest papyrus rolls, and some of his sentences meant for churches would have no point now, when things have changed so much.

O. : Besides these written notes, I expect you have in your memory much advice he gave you about church management?

T. : Yes, much—though I couldn't repeat it in his own words.

O. : That doesn't matter. Now let me tell you what I want you to do. Copy out for me every fragment of Paul's handwriting that you possess; I shall find places for them all. Divide them into two bundles, the earlier and the later, because I want to make two small books of your material, and—

T. : But I haven't nearly enough to make one!

O. : Wait; I haven't finished. Then write out what you remember of the advice he gave you in talk about church life. Never mind about the exact

words ; write it down in your own way. And when parts of it seem clearly out-of-date, alter it enough to make it suit the needs of our church to-day. You will be able, as no-one else could, to know exactly what Paul's counsel would have been were he with us still. With what you give me in this way, added to the original Paul fragments, I shall have enough for the two books. Better treat the Titus letter you mentioned in the same fashion ; this we will put in separately. . . .

So when Onesimus duly received Timothy's parcel he found that, as he expected, its contents were partly notes written over a long period by Paul to Timothy, partly other fragments written by Paul, partly Paul's instructions about church life, as spoken to Timothy, re-worded and brought up-to-date by him, and, finally, the Titus letter, edited by Timothy in the same manner. Onesimus soon abandoned the attempt to arrange this material in any sort of order, and he made a few blunders—as when he placed the cloak-and-papyri note after, instead of before, Paul's last message of farewell. But Onesimus had carried out his idea ; the “ Pastorals ” were included in the collection of Paul's letters circulated among the churches, and everyone accepted the Pastorals as—which, indeed, in a real sense they were—the authentic utterances of Paul.

Readers will forgive, I hope, this unexpected digression into the realm of fancy. It is simply a convenient way of amplifying and illustrating the third of those theories about the Pastorals which were briefly set out at the beginning of this chapter. That a collection of Paul's letters was made and put into circulation somewhere about the year 90 seems

tolerably certain. But that Onesimus was the man who edited the collection and that Timothy contributed to it are, of course, mere conjectures, for which the most that can be said is that they are neither impossible nor altogether improbable. And if what actually happened did resemble, even remotely, what has been imagined here, the bewildering character, contents and language of the Pastorals would be adequately explained. Yet guesses, however plausible they seem, must not be disguised as evidence, and something more solid than speculation is necessary as the basis of confident assertions. The most that, with our present knowledge, we can say about the Pastorals is that acceptance of the first of the three theories about them is immensely difficult, that the second is almost demonstrably wrong, and that the third comes nearer than either of the others to solving what still remains a problem. In other words, a considerable balance of probability, in my judgment, rests with the view that the Pastorals, in their existing form, arrangement and language, cannot be regarded as letters written by Paul, but that they are considerably influenced by him throughout and also contain a number—very variously estimated—of genuine extracts from his correspondence. Further than this it seems impossible to go.

The contents of the Pastorals are so miscellaneous, the lack of connecting thought and orderly sequence between one subject and the next is so marked, that an attempt to provide an outline summary of them, as has been done with each of the earlier Epistles, does not seem worth while. At this point, therefore, we will take our leave of Paul and his letters. Yet

this, I hope, will be for the moment only. Indeed, the chief aim of this book is to encourage the reader in studying the Epistles for himself, in returning to them again and again, always with a happy certainty that they have still more both of pleasure and profit to give him. The better, too, he knows the letters, the better he will understand and the more highly he will estimate their writer. Paul, Apostle of the Gentiles, Saint and Martyr, will be seen also as one of the most human and lovable of men. But, beyond all else, we shall remember that, under Providence, it is to him that we owe our own Christianity. No small thing must it seem to share that ideal of discipleship which he revealed by his character, defended by his fortitude and ennobled by his example.

THE END